AMTIX!

A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
No.5 MARCH 1986
£1

MONTHLY SOFTWARE REVIEW FOR THE AMSTRAD COMPUTERS

DROOL OVER

WHO DARES WINS II
SPELLBOUND
PING PONG
SPINDIZZY

CAULDRON + ZORK I
The Maps

PREVIEWS:
Robin of the Wood
Tau Ceti
Zoid

AMSTRAD

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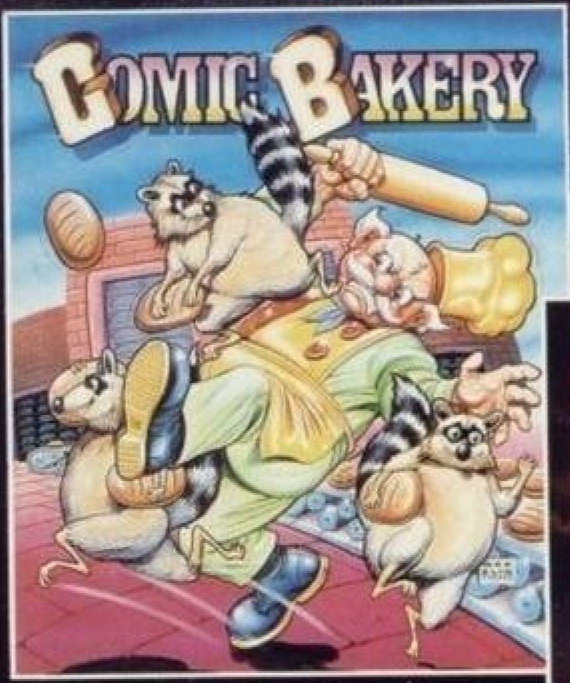

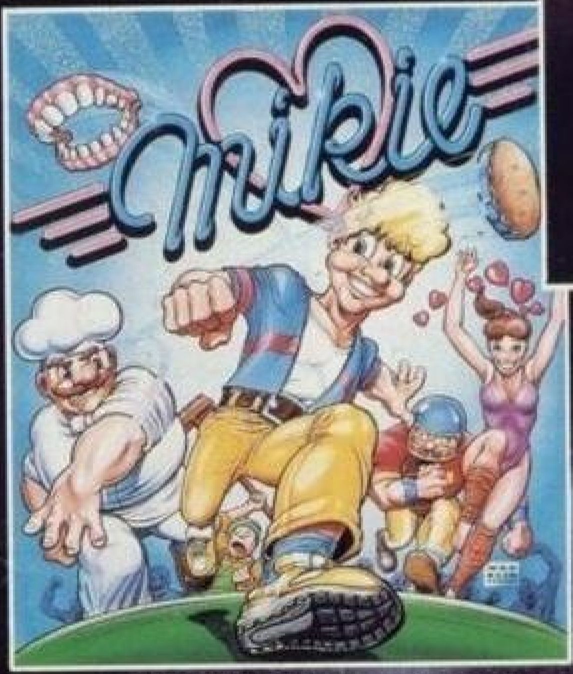

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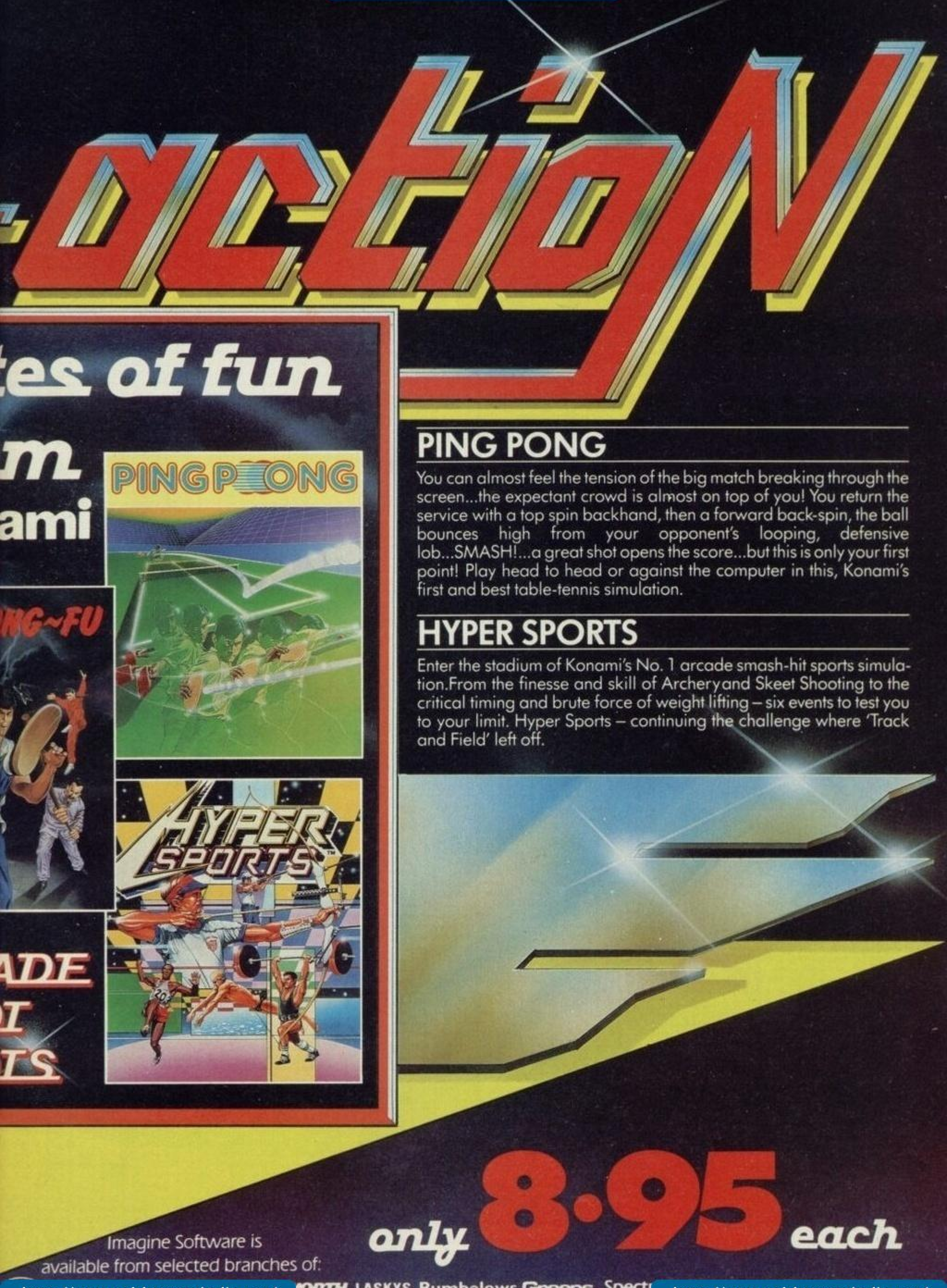

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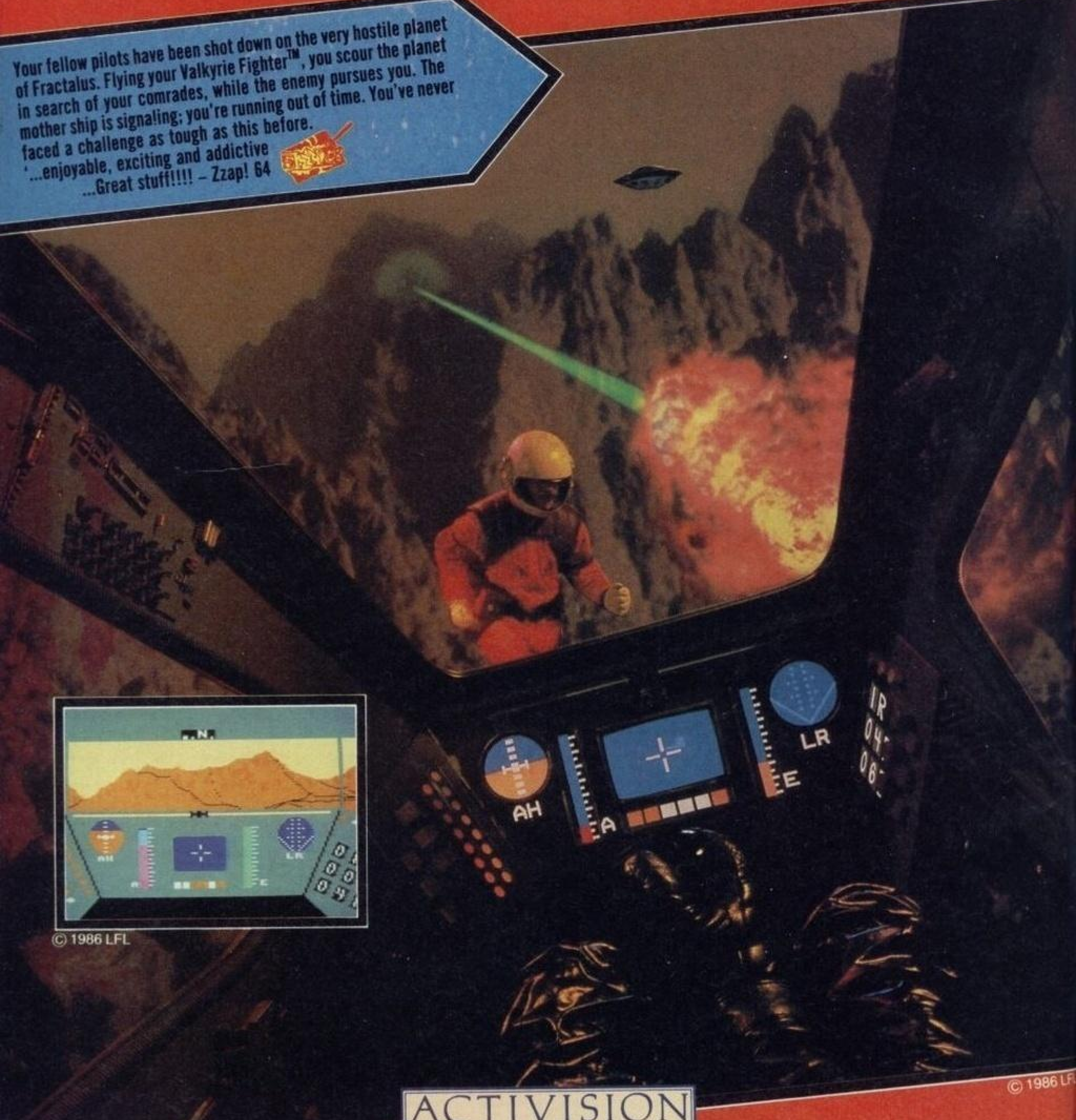

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AMTIX!

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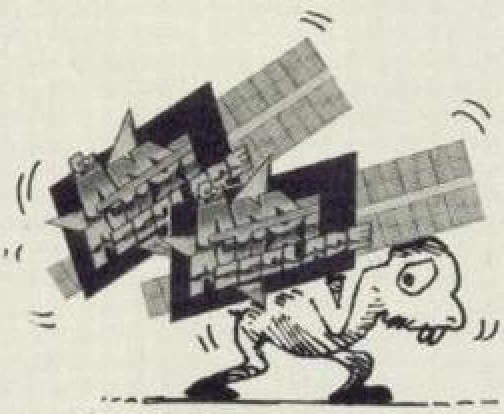
AMTIX!

WELCOME MALCOLM

The first task is to welcome a new addition to the AMTIX! team. **Malcolm Harding** has joined as Editor. Roger Kean, the founding Editor, now becomes our publishing executive. Malcolm's talents as a professional word surgeon, combined with his enthusiasm for Amstrad computers, will make him a valuable member of the team. What's more, Malcolm hails from the bright lights and wild life of Oswestry, a sort of Shropshire mini-city. In Ludlow terms an Oswestrian is positively cosmopolitan, especially after a daily round trip of 96 miles, so he should help broaden our horizons a little.

It was Malcolm's idea to establish a Club page, seen for the first time in this issue. The page fits in with AMTIX! which sees itself, not as an instruction manual, but as a vehicle for Amstrad enthusiasts. Eventually we hope the club page will be a rallying point and unite the number of small Amstrad clubs and bring people and their ideas closer together — collective creativity. The 'official' Amstrad user club is more of a commercial enterprise than a club. It has failed to tap and exploit the undoubted energy and enthusiasm of its many members. Now that Amstrad have sold the club — and its members — to another company, this situation is unlikley to change. It is all very well being able to offer your members discounts on products, but what they really want is an opportunity to explore the fascinating world of computers in the company of others — and not just become passive consumers. If you are interested in starting a club, or if you already run one, then please get in touch with us.



APOLOGIES

Firebird were stunned that their game, *Elite*, didn't get an accolade — and so were we. It should have had one, and so should **Gargoyle**'s *Sweevo's World*. If you take a careful look again at the pages you will see that the space was left for the Accolades to go in. How can this happen? Apparently those pages suffered from a technical problem known as NEG (not enough glue) resulting in the accolades falling off the artwork while it was in transit to London. These things happen.

Another apology is owed to **US Gold/Epyx**). Gary Liddon wrote the review of Electric Dreams' *Winter Sports* but his confused mind kept referring to it as *Winter Games*, the promised blockbuster from the US Gold/Epyx stable. US Gold/Epyx have had a spot of trouble with this name before; well, you don't have to be a Liddon to be confused by it. Understandably they were anxious we should put the record straight, especially since *Winter Games* has yet to be released on the Amstrad.

AND A MOAN OF OUR OWN.

The number of Amstrad owners subscribing to Prestel services, like Amsnet and Micronet, is growing rapidly. The Amstrad is, as expected, proving to be a useful machine for those interested in computer communications. One of the Amstrad's strengths has been its appeal to people who have never used computers before, they may only be interested in it as a games machine or as a communications terminal — tasks for which specialist computer knowledge should not be required.

You may not need to be a computer expert to enjoy services like Telecom Gold or Prestel, but a good analytical and legal mind is essential. Most of the confusion surrounds companies who are trying to market modems and software which has not received BABT approval — Telecom's approval board. You see, without their say so you cannot connect a modem onto their phone line, just in case it isn't safe. Sounds reasonable. But what is far from reasonable is the time it takes and the money it costs for such approval. It can take months to get clearance, and cost thousands of pounds to pay for the testing. When a company has developed a product they need to put it on the market quickly to start recovering the development costs, but while they wait for BABT they are losing thousands in sales.

To make matters worse the rules governing approval are incredibly petty. Changing a simple component, say an LED light on the front panel, from one type to another, can mean the modem is no longer approved. To make matters worse no one in the industry seems terribly sure that BT still have the legal right to enforce their petty and costly rules, now that they have been privatised

The present approvals system makes entry into the modem market for potential manufacturers, very costly. Some don't survive. At this moment the inexpensive, full function Magic Modem is being delayed by BABT. Not because it failed the tests, but because it just hasn't been given the go ahead. This stupidity confuses the customers and increases the costs. Why can't Telecom see the benefit to be gained from encouraging the spread of computer communications. Ultimately, it is not in their interests to make life more difficult for the rest of us.

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US GOLD
AMTIX

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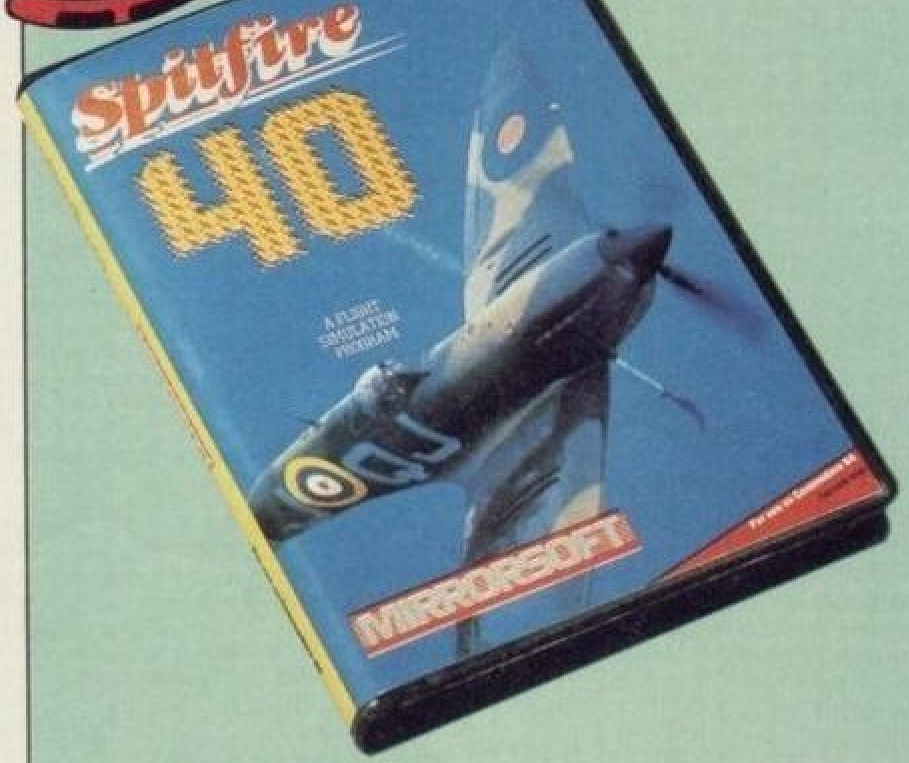
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40
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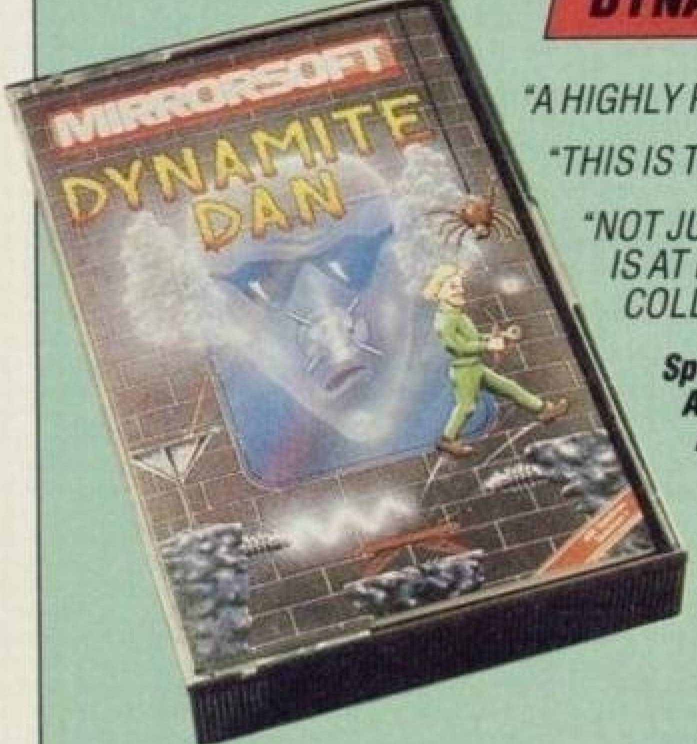
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Welcome Amsters to the fifth issue of AMTIX! The postbag continues to build up to the point where our postman is complaining of a strained back. The OTS team claim the mountain of mail is intruding on their tea breaks. Anyway to make their task a little bit easier please ensure you address your letters in the correct manner (see bottom of the column for guidance) and also make certain any seriously technical letters or problems go to the AMTECH heading. This prevents the post sorters from blowing a fuse. If you have a technical letter you can enclose it with your OTS, letter but please make sure they are on separate sheets of paper. Anyway on to the letter of the month.

TRANSFERRING TAPE TO DISK

Dear AMTIX!
First off, an excellent mag. Whereas Amstrad Action is like The Sun, AMTIX! falls into the category of the Observer, as it provides a bit of both worlds (but not too much of either). Now I've got the crawling out of the way I'll get down to serious business.

Re Dennis Trowbridge letter in issue No 3. As I own a 6128 I totally agree with him that it should be possible to transfer games on tape to disk. Offering the program on disk is helpful but you end up paying extra money for disks you don't need. I don't mind if the disk version is a couple of quid more but when companies start to rip us off by adding an extra fiver to the price it then gets out of hand. What I suggest is the following: On side 1 have a cassette version that won't transfer. On the flip side have a short program that allows a disk copy to be made. The program could protect the disk game by messing about with catalogue in the disk. After this short copier program then have the actual game, it could be saved as data blocks or the like. This idea would eliminate the need for disk versions and should bring down the price. As Mr Trowbridge said, pirates will always find a way around protection which then leaves the amateurs like Mr Trowbridge and I totally stuck. Some bright spark in the industry is bound to say 'With that scheme you can make endless disk copies', but not if you have a code sheet provided with the game (like the Software projects multi-coloured ones). Come on software houses, reply!

Lastly, re Derek Tatum's letter in Lettertech. Serious Software does sound tacky and pompous, how about 'Utility Time'?
Neil Scrimgeour, Corby, Northants

Thank you for the comparison with the Observer — does that mean we can my boiled eggs anyway we like now?

We think your idea is worthy of discussion. There are some programs around that allow themselves to be transferred to disk, *3D Voice Chess* being an example. That particular software house made no attempt to restrict the number of disk copies that could be made — either they weren't worried, or they didn't think it could be done. As far as amateur pirates are concerned a code sheet might foil them, but we can't help wondering if the technique is a viable deterrent; why isn't it more widely used for protecting tapes. It would be nice to get some comments from the industry on Neil's idea.

In the meantime the team has decided to award you the coveted Letter of the Month with its sensational award of £20 worth of software.
OTS

TIME TO SELECT A MASCOT

Dear AMTIX!
Please tell me if you've got a mascot lined up for your great magazine. Since ZZAP! has that menace Rockford, what have you got for us Amstrad owners? Why not have Roland from those Amsoft games or even *Wally Week* from Mikro-Gen? I beg you, please, please, please, please find a mascot or Rockford will think that he rules the world of computer mags.
P Lavers

Rockford, like the rest of the ZZAP! crew, tends towards swell headedness. Maybe yours isn't such a bad idea — do we hear any votes for Roland?
OTS

IN PRAISE OF TAPE . . . AND GRAMMAR

Dear Sir,
I have just finished inwardly digesting the Jan 86 issue of AMTIX! and have started ordering it from my newsagents. I enjoyed it as usual but would like to comment on a couple of items that appeared in On The Spot.

First, Mr Trowbridge, he makes reference to disk use with the words, 'after all, tape is not exactly the most reliable form of storage,' and then goes on about the time taken for loading. Okay, Mr Trowbridge is right about the time taken to load, but when will people like him get it right? Why, if tape is considered so unreliable, do the large mainframe machines still use the large reel-to-reel units to hold and feed data? What Mr Trowbridge and like thinking people should be saying is that tape transfer systems based on cassette CAN be unreliable, although some people can use the system for years without problems. I was taught that a bad workman always blames his tools and wonder if this could be the case or maybe it's that he just cannot use the tools!

Another point concerns a Mr Lamb, who writes 'Recipe for Success'. Well now, I'm not quite his age although I am getting on somewhat plus I'm disabled. Mr Lamb might have been reading my mind when he wrote his letter stating magazines assume all readers are in the class of super whizzkids/programmers, call them what you will. In general I agree wholeheartedly with him when he says these youngsters don't seem to be able to spell but also feel they appear to have little, if any, command of the English language. All those

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brills, fabs, and so on would appear to prove this point. Mind you some of the people who write/edit and in general put these publications together seem to be on a par with these youngsters.
MR Pugh, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan

To be fair to Mr Trowbridge I think his final point could be summed up as 'disks are better than tapes'. Perhaps he did go over the top a little in condemning tapes in quite the way he did but even the large reel to reel tapes used by massive institutions are being pushed out in favour of large and expensive hard disk packs. Also, it's hardly a fair comparison — cassettes have never been particularly reliable, whereas reel-to-reel tape decks are invariably more sophisticated (and much more expensive). It may well be true that bad workmen blame their tools but do you know a good workman who would put up with bad tools.

You should try reviewing all the wonderful games that drop into our offices and see if you don't make use of a few new hyperboles. Many people complain about strange new words claiming their use is an indication of the misuse of the language. You would probably accept that a game could be described as 'fantastic' and yet that would be to use the colloquial meaning of the word rather than its strict, old fashioned, meaning. You're beginning to sound a bit like Zaphod Beeblebrox the fourth, great Grandfather of Zaphod Beeblebrox the first. (Read Hitchhikers Guide to see why).
OTS

A NEED FOR A NEW CLUB

Dear AMTIX!
Like many other people in this great country, I have just purchased (with a great deal of help), a new Amstrad only to find that the user club, about which I'd heard so much, costs £19.95 to join. I was very disappointed Amsoft did not think about three categories of people that would find £20.00 outside of their means, namely schoolchildren, the elderly and the unemployed.

Would it not be possible for someone to come up with a club for these three?

I know you won't publish this but perhaps you could ask other people's points of view.
Derek Plows, Mildenhall, Suffolk

There you are, we've published it! You aren't the only person to complain. A lot of people think they get very little from the club in return for their twenty pounds, unless, of course you are buying extra hardware in which case the membership cost can be made up for by the available discounts. No doubt you will be interested to know Amstrad have now sold the user club but more about that in the news. You might think independent user clubs could offer better value, in which case you had better keep an eye on our new club page.
OTS

HOW DO I KEEP MUM MUM?

Dear AMTIX!
I'm not going to grovel on about how good your mag is. We all know it is. I'm going to tell you what a pain my mum is. Whenever I'm playing on my straddles she wants me to do something or other. When I bought *Exploding Fist* I played on it for hours then when I was on the 9th Dan, guess what — Yes, 'Come down here and do . . . 'etc. I could have put her head in the Christmas nutcracker.

Secondly, after playing, *Encounter*, I had got to zone 0 with one dustbin left, then my mother burst in, 'Washing up!' I panicked and ?!!! What a mother, but I do love her.

By the way, when you launched AMTIX! a similar mag had been launched too. This introduced the Amstrad Index and then you did it. Why? Did you copy it. Also could you tell me what a 'Schneider' is? It is written on Melbourne's *Exploding Fist*.
Mark Davies

We've all got mums and they can certainly be problems at times. Here's a good way round the lady in question: Get lots of lovely games ready to be loaded. Pick a time when mum has nothing better to do and is unlikely to be disturbed. Then get her playing. If you choose the right games she'll be an addict in no time. Then, of course, you won't be able to get near the computer!

Should you have ever had the chance to see early issues of our sister mag, CRASH, you would have seen the 'Living Software Guide' that appeared in early issues. A similar event was planned for ZZAP! 64, but its editor at the time, none other than the proprietor of the other mag you refer to, decided against it and all the copious work done by Robin Candy was thrown away. The point is, our pedigree is on record, and the Amstrad index to existing software, compiled by Robin, was an absolute certainty in AMTIX! long before the first issue was on the art tables. We don't really care what other people do

In some European countries, Holland for example, the Amstrad is marketed under the name of 'Schneider', and some British software houses with an eye to European sales are marking their cassettes accordingly for a country where the name 'Amstrad' is unknown.
OTS

ENSURE YOUR REGULAR COPY OF AMTIX!

When a magazine is rising in circulation (being new, AMTIX! is doing this) and so sells out immediately, you may experience difficulty in obtaining your copy every month. So the best thing to do is place a regular order with your local newsagent, which you can do by handing him this form.

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SMOOTH RUNNING ON 6128

Dear AMTIX!
I like your magazine — and have only two complaints.

Cutting out a coupon destroys information on the other side of the page. If you must have cut out coupons, why not have a special page for them that can be removed without destroying the rest of the magazine. You might then get more response to your adverts.

That horrible ugly giant poster in issue number 3. What a useless load of old tat. Why not a giant full colour games map instead?

Buying a cassette to run on the 6128 is a problem at present. Why not produce a list of tape software that will run on this machine and a list of software that will not?

It is with this in mind that I have enclosed a list of software that I know from experience will or will not run on the 6128.

This lot WILL run on the 6128.
Splat, Laserwarp, Codename Mat, Hunchback, 3D Invaders, Cyrus 3D Chess, CPC 464 Amstrad Tutorial Basic, Southern Belle, Dragontorc, Superchess, 3D Voice Chess, Kung-Fu, Number One, Beach Head, Jet Set Willy, Sabre Wulf, Decathlon.

This lot will NOT run on the 6128.
Gems Of Stradus, Crazy Golf, Cubit.
A Mahom, Wallasey, Merseyside

A coupons page always sounds like a good idea to readers, but it isn't that easy to arrange, believe it or not! At the last minute, changes to pagination can result in an ad or a competition with a coupon being put almost anywhere, whatever's on the back. We suggest you photocopy the coupon if that's possible, but you can always the 'ape' the essentials of the coupon in letter form if you want. Meantime, we'll do our best to keep coupons in blocks wherever possible.

Thank you for the list. We did put out a plea in the last issue for just such a thing, though we had something a little more comprehensive in mind. When we have collected a few more like yours we will publish the 'Comprehensive Compatibility Guide'.
OTS

GRAND PRIX AND CLEAN BOOTS

Dear Amtix!
I was sitting processing the day's orders in the busy ARNOR office when somebody pushed the AMTIX! mag under my nose. I don't know why — it wasn't running at the time! The mag had been opened at the letters page and a large picture of *3D Grand Prix* inlay was now in front of me.

As the author of *3D Grand Prix* I was very grateful for the quarter page ad which was far cheaper than the usual rates, (could you manage a half page, full colour next time)? I read, without interest the letter in OTS from Shafqat Rasul, and his comments were about as constructive as a mallet with a Lego set! Shaftrat admitted he works for a newsagent. In other words he reads all the interesting magazines before he pops them through your letter box. His ability to put pen to paper is beyond dispute but the words that come out really show that he should not waste trees in this manner.

Fatrat's comments were totally unqualified and I suggest there are over 30,000 owners of *3D Grand Prix* who would totally disagree with him. In fact, some of the Parrotfact statements were totally without fact. The game was originally released on the BBC micro by Software Invasion before *Pole Position* had left the Atari stables. So it was a Beeb conversion not a Speccy one!

Furthermore, Paraquat stated we should produce only original titles. Well this is just being naive! The software houses will produce titles that have a market demand. Last Christmas there was such a demand for a good racing game on the Amstrad micros. *3D Grand Prix* was the answer! I feel that sales of over 30,000 units in a two month period really justifies the conversion of this BBC title.

The AMTIX review of *3D Grand Prix* was totally unbiased and quite fair even though it contained some inaccuracies. The names of all the courses were incorrectly spelt (as they were in the Amsoft inlay . . . Ooops!!), well that's only 120,000 spelling mistakes now then!

By the way, how did the 'CTRL ARTWORK' poke spill out to you lot at AMTIX! The other well known mag was supposed to be printing that this month. Actually I used 'ARTWORK' because it was the title of the Amster Graphics prog I wrote for Kuma and I knew I could use it as a plug someday! (Is that alright Ed?). I suppose Pirateshrat has got that one as well. Goody, another free ad next month! Perhaps he could slag off *Gatecrasher* a bit! — that one's not selling too well at the moment.

I better go now as the phone is ringing again. Another customer after his *Maxam*, *Protext* and *Utopia*! (Can I say that here?) *(it's pushing it a bit* **-ED***)*.

Keep up the good work Shaftcat, Oh and I nearly forgot, I think that AMTIX! mag is the best thing since Health and Efficiency and I will come and lick your boots any time. (I wonder if I will get my copy sent to me now).
Dave Mendes, Exopal Software Services.

Well that didn't take long did it? It was inevitable someone would jump to the defence of *3D Grand Prix* after that vitriolic attack in the last ish. But it was a bit unsubtle of you to let us know it was you — the author — you should have pretended to be a fan — rather like a well known adventure creation package is being defended in every mag in the land! Glad you liked the full size pictures but what a surprise that you haven't had the bill yet — the accounts department will be chased! Keep up the good work.

We were going to give you letter of the month but no doubt you've got more software than you need. So we won't.
OTS

WHY ARE WE INCOMPATIBLE?

Dear AMTIX!
I recently bought am Amstrad 664, as the bloke who sold it to me in the shop said 'Oh yeah mate, it'll run all of the 464 software'.

I was to learn soon after that it won't! Every Sunday at 6 you find me watching Channel 4 and the American football, so I suppose you can guess what the first game I bought was!

Amstrad tell me that the *Amfoot* is not 664 compatible. I have now copied the game onto disk, but it still won't run. Now that I can 'list' the game, I wonder if you can tell me of any simple changes that I can make to get the program playable on my 664, which I must admit to being very pleased with.

Thanks for an entertaining read every month.
Ian Williams, Waltham Abbey, Essex

Bit of a toughy this, Ian. We really don't know how to help you, not without seeing a copy of the game. On the phone all Amsoft would say was that the game was deleted. The good news is that MacMillan Software are about to release their own American football game. It sounds like it might be streets ahead of the one Amsoft no longer offer.
OTS

COMPETITION CRAZY

Dear MITAX!!
You Amsters down there in Ludlow have really gone and done it this time, haven't you? The reason for this outburst? I will explain . . .

May I ask a question? Can competitions reproduce? Can birds fly? Are double-decker buses always crowded?

Okay, so in issue 1 you decide to make an impact. Result? Five competition. Fair enough.

Issue 2: 'Keep it big', say Roger and Jeremy. Result? Six competitions. Okay we'll swallow that one.

Issue 3: Imagine the scene: The team stagger into the office at 2.00 in the morning after a hard night's drinking down at the local where Oliver thought he saw Terminal Man through one of the windows. Once returned, a mind-numbingly bored competition minion has a flash of inspiration. Amazing you think, there's still hope for MITAX!! Wrong, Hope died with the coming of Splash (Zapperooni was another nail in the coffin). Anyway, back to the inspiration. 'I know,' says the minion peering through glazed eyes, 'let's put a competition in next month's MITAX!' Result of one heavy session - NINE COMPETITIONS! Does being a MITAXIAN give you a license to be totally insane? Or is that one of the many qualifications you need to enter MITAX!! towers? Come on guys, stash the beer away, sober up and act normal. Or is normal the wrong word?
Christopher Winstanley, Freckleton, Lancs

So you don't like winning free prizes, huh? Well, we've all got our problems, yours is obviously spelling. However, your missive did inspire us to take a look at Comp Minion's activities and we realised, after he broke down in tears under questioning, that he was actually trying to take over the magazine. Thanks to your letter we stopped him, just in time. To make sure this never happens again we have taken his disk drive away so, what with having to save text files onto cassette he just hasn't got time to write a whole magazine of competitions. Thank you. As for our being insane — ridiculous we are just a nice bunch of thoughtful, kind, considerate . . . The next writer has a point to make about comps.
OTS

WE'RE GETTING THERE

Dear AMTIX!
Although I look forward to seeing your magazine on the shelves of the newsagents each month, I am a little disappointed that it has to be supported by half an article scattered across the pages that first saw life in CRASH magazine. The PCW Show article in the first issue of AMTIX! along with one or two articles and competition 'borrowed' from the pages of CRASH in the Christmas issue 3. In this new year, now that the magazine is apparently established, please organise yourselves and let AMTIX! be independent from CRASH (eg your Camel competition seems to state that there are prizes for Spectrum as well as Amstrad owners — the reason being, methinks, that the competition was originally written for CRASH). So how about it huh? No offence to Spectrum owners of course, but the Amstrad, I feel, should receive the material popularity that the Spectrum has enjoyed in the past.

One thing I feel can be excluded from this criticism though is the re-printing of the picture story 'The Terminal Man' borrowed from the sister magazines of AMTIX!. I think that it is excellent and I am pleased I am able to read it in AMTIX! (although in issue 3, page 121, did someone actually say something or is that empty speech bubble an accident?). The science fiction artwork of Oliver Frey is excellent (one of the reasons I buy AMTIX!), and I look forward to seeing one of his spaceships on the cover of the mag.

Long live AMTIX!
Patrick Lee, Cheshunt, Herts

Yes, well . . . there have been one or two little slip ups in the art department (they get confused with three mags on the table at times). The comps that run in all three or just two of the mags are set up that way, and we can't see anything wrong with that, unless the typesetting gets muddled up sometimes! As to articles, some of the earlier CRASH/AMTIX! material may have appeared much earlier in CRASH but you will notice that as AMTIX! finds it's feet the material is being published simultaneously in both. I think one of the articles you are referring to is 'Pictures held in RAM'. That was no less interesting to AMTIX! readers than it was to CRASH readers.

The blank speech bubble in Terminal Man was a bit unfortunate, but there's a lot of complex work in the separations (to mask the colour behind the bubble and make it white) and unfortunately in that one case the black text failed to be replaced. Ho hum, such is life!
OTS

CHARTING A SUCCESS

Dear AMTIX!
I have just bought your latest issue and I think it's the best around. But I see one problem, the solution to which would take only about a page at most if it were to included. Don't you think it's about time we had a chart that covered both tape and disk? Every other magazine has a chart and whilst we know you're different to the others, I don't think that including a chart would be derisory. Also, could you state in your reviews whether a game on tape is also available on disk? If you should print this could you make sure that a copy goes to Melbourne House and another to Imagine. I love 'beat em up' games and there seem to be none on disk.
Gavin Grimes, Mortiner, Berkshire

By now you will have noticed that we have started a readers' chart which does cover tape and disk games — it takes up two pages by the way. True, there are precious few games available on tape AND disk. This is due to the shortage of disks and the shortage of people able to duplicate games onto them. But things are improving — slowly.
OTS

SPECIAL DISPENSATION

Dear Amtix!
After buying issues 1 and 2 of AMTIX! I decided to wait until issue 3 and fill in the subscription form as it was too late for the December edition to do so. To my horror you have changed the free games to . . . adventures! Is it possible for me to subscribe and get *Darkstar* and *Tankbusters* by Design Design because I hate, loathe and detest adventure games. I hope so, otherwise I'll have to wait for more arcade games with your subscription offer.

Oh yes, nearly forgot. Can you tell me if there is a second disk drive (5.25 inches for the Amstrad machines?
Gary Varnam, Bolton, Lancs

We will make a special exception for you. Get hold of the form from the Design Design deal and send that in. We are sure Auntie Aggie could be persuaded to help you out, if you ask her nicely.

Indeed that are 5.25 inch drives for the Amstrad, the sort that take those really floppy, easy to destroy disks. Ask Timatic Systems or Screens Distribution. But think very carefully about this, having two different sized disk drives has advantages — but a lot of problems as well
OTS

A HAPPY 664 OWNER

Dear AMTIX!
Such competitions, such prizes!!! I must commend you on the January issue for a range of competition prizes to suit the more serious Amstrad owners amongst us. Not, I must add, that I am averse to a spot of alien annihilation or 'Gandalfing', but the only way I can justify any expenditure in that direction is as a present for my 7 year old son.

I actually justified my initial outlay by pointing out I might be able to make a bit on the side (I am a programmer by profession), and I waited until I could get the best machine for my money. Guess what I bought — A 664! And the 6128 was released almost before the ink was dry on the cheque.

An awful lot of comment on the 664/6128 fiasco is really sour grapes . . . . 'If only I'd waited' . . . etc. I am satisfied with the 664. The advent of the 6128 has not in any way reduced the quality of the 664 as a machine. It is still excellent. I would point out, however, the 6128 has drastically reduced the market for software written on the 664. Basic programs may be upwardly and downwardly compatible, as will 464 emulation code — provided they don't use the extra memory. The extra memory may be available, but CPM plus is needed to make the best use of it. I feel Amstrad could go a long way to smoothing out the friction if they were to offer a system disk for CPM plus to registered 664 owners at a nominal cost. At least then, those who feel really hard done by can upgrade memory (from DK'Tronics) and have a reasonable emulation of a 6128.
Alan Saunders, Blackley, Manchester

Glad that you approve of the competitions, despite a disadvantaged childhood, the Comps Minion tries his best you know.

There's general agreement with your sentiments about the 664. While Amstrad may not have played the affair straight there's no doubt that it's still a very good beast. As far as emulation of the 6128 is concerned you may have noticed a little piece in last month's news titled 'DK Tronics failing where Amstrad failed'. Needles to say DK were nonplussed when they read that. But, they are at last sorting out a CPM plus system or emulator for the interested ones to buy. The cost will be minimal but they still feet it would be fairer to offer it as an optional extra rather than make everyone who wants extra memory fork out.
OTS

SIREN SOFTWARE SIREN SOFTWARE

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HELP!!

Dear AMTIX!
I own an Amstrad CPC6128 and, needless to say, own a great deal of games as well as business things. However, I seem to be encountering a few problems with some of my games. Firstly, *3D Starstrike*, *Way of the Exploding Fist*, and *Darkstar* all seem, despite our greatest efforts, to really not want to load.
Please, please help us!!

Secondly, (and a little less pleadingly), do you publish lists of tips, pokes or advice for the following games:-
The Hobbit, *Return to Eden*, *Dun Darach* and *Subsunk*?
Ben Taylor, Glossop, Derbyshire

I suspect there are other reasons for your not being able to load those games. All three of them will load and run on a 6128; *Darkstar*, however, will lock up and must be re-loaded at the end of each game. We gave some pointers in issue 4 on solving loading problems so have a read through and follow the suggestions. It's all too easy to claim that games aren't compatible but this is seldom the case.

As for help with adventure games you will notice that Sean Masterson, the Mighty Muppet, is coming to your rescue. This issue he begins AMTIX! ARCANA — the adventure helpline. With any luck your finger nails should be saved by his scribblings. Hope you enjoy it!
OTS

That's it for this issue. If you have any points to make, grievances to air, points to award on subjects ranging from AMTIX! itself to the role of the 6128 in this universe or any other then write to the OTS team. The address is ON THE SPOT, AMTIX! MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.

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OBSIDIAN

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Obsidian is an asteroid, but it's not the normal run of the mill huge piece of rock floating through space. *Obsidian* is also a huge space station, which is built within the hollowed centre of the behemoth. To rendezvous with its mother ship *Obsidian* has to pass through the gravity well of a black hole. The five engines which power the ship are suitably shielded to survive the tortuous journey, but the human crew aren't. The ship is abandoned and the crew take refuge in a small shuttle craft, sufficiently prepared to survive the stresses and strains of the black hole. Once through, the shuttle will redock with the asteroid and continue onwards to the mother ship.

Not a bad plan until a freak radiation storm disables *Obsidian's* power systems. Now the hulk is drifting slowly into oblivion without either a flight path or engine control. Such a haphazard flight into another universe would destroy the ship. A meeting is held on the shuttle and a 'volunteer' is chosen to teleport back to the ship and reactivate all the necessary equipment.

You are the 'volunteer' and even though your knowledge of the ship is intimate, your way is now constantly blocked by the reactivated security systems. All the internal doors have been locked and laser grids have sparked into life. The keys and passes to get past the defences are held in different sections of the ship within locked boxes. You have the keys for these and may collect the helpful objects, although you may only hold one object at a time.

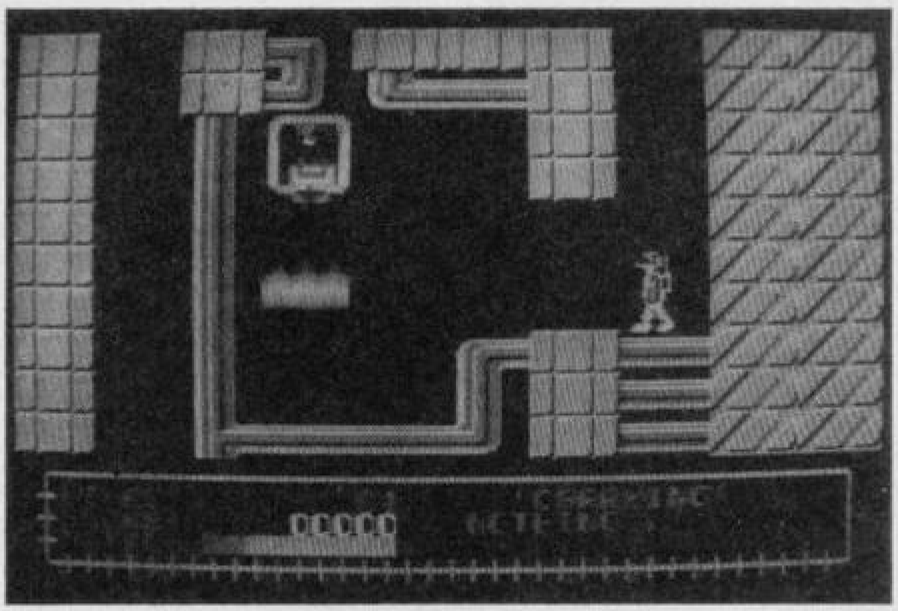
To get around the ship a nitro powered jet pack is supplied. By modern standards this is a bit antiquated, but it was the best available at the onset of the mission. The jet pack's major disadvantage is its tendency to explode when the fuel tanks empty. Around the ship are various nitro refuelling points, but they are few and far between.

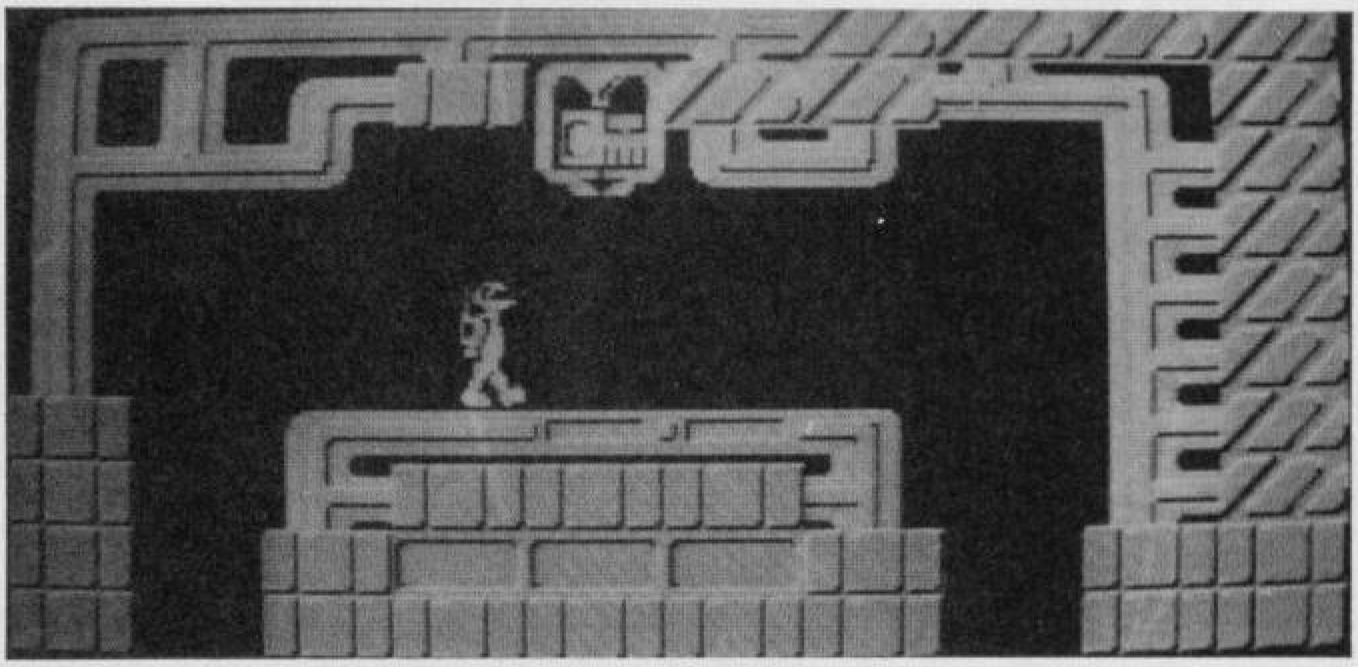
To achieve your aims it's important to make the best of your inability to carry more than one object. Also to survive its best to avoid contact with security drones wandering along their preset paths. This is all done with a bit of brainwork and a lot of careful jet pack manoeuvring. The controls available to do this are left and right movement and thrust which activates the back pack's engines and throws you into the air. Another key is provided to collect/drop any objects found around the ship.

As you move around the ship leaving the edge of the screen brings you onto another in a flick screen fashion. The backgrounds are mostly of a futuristic type with bas-relief graphics. Mode two is used for the screen display and the graphics are fairly detailed, taking advantage of the extra resolution.

The problems set out in the game are fairly logical. Along the bottom of the screen is a status panel showing score and nitro levels plus a brief text description of the object carried. When collecting an item its use may seem strange, but when the situation presents itself for the artifact to be used all comes clear. Once the star map is located and placed in the right location the game is over.

Control keys: Definable





CRITICISM

1 *Obsidian* **is quite a nice arcade adventure of an above average sort. The graphics are far more than appealing and are really quite enjoyable. The game itself is fairly simple, although ardent adventurers might well find it quite enjoyable since it isn't easy to solve. The jet pack control is nice, although it is a bit easy to crash. The nitro tends to run out a little prematurely as well. Overall not a bad game though not exactly mega. May be well worth a look at for the hardened arcade adventurer.**

2 After the first impact of possibly a good, well presented game I discovered that *Obsidian* was just like any other problem game but with a bit more colour and less sound (only a small amount of sound effects). The trouble was that it became all very predictable and easy to solve once a few puzzles had been solved. The animation of the main character and the baddies is quite nice, although hostiles seem rather few and far between. Although the game contains some hard arcade features I found there were not enough of them with a few screens containing nothing on the move and nowhere in sight was anything moving out of its set pattern to chase you — which tended to be a bit boring after a while. *Obsidian* is a game for people who like arcade/adventures that do not rely too heavily on the splatting or problem parts of the game, although presenting a challenge at first I don't think it's got much game life-span.

3 *The graphics are definitely the most striking feature about this program — some of the effects generated by the 3D bas-relief graphics are really nice. Otherwise there's nothing outstanding about the game — it's just an average, if rather simple, arcade adventure. I suppose that if you're a real addict of arcade adventures and are suffering from withdrawal symptoms this could well keep you occupied for a while, otherwise shop around, there are better than this.*

OBSIDIAN
artic

Presentation 72%
Definable keys are most helpful but overall presentation could be much better

Graphics 84%
Most striking feature of the game

Sound 37%
Too few sound effects

Playability 72%
Challenging at first but soon loses its appeal

Addictive qualities 61%
One for the true arcade addict

Value for money 63%
Not overpriced for the Amstrad market

Overall 64%
A pretty ordinary game with no remarkable features.

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Spindizzy

Electric Dreams, £9.95.
cass
Author: Paul Shirley

As we all know, working for the corporation is a hard life indeed and the mission you're to be sent on this time is far from the usual run of the mill stuff. The back room boys have discovered a new dimension that contains a world hung in space. Of course they want it mapped and as Trainee Assistant Cartographer for Unknown Worlds, the job's fallen to you. Because of the company's far from noble motivations, it's all government sponsored work you know, time is money. The more time you spend out there the more money the company can claim. Since the energy powering the scout craft isn't covered by the government grant what you're supplied with is very meagre indeed. Not to worry though, they say that in a few of the more recently discovered dimensions there's plenty of energy to be collected. It would be wise to take advantage of any such power source for it looks good if you're going for promotion. The craft you are given is none too impressive,it's one of those old fashioned centrifugal drive inverted pyramids,and happens to be called Gerald. So there you have it, do a good job and the rewards will be far from sparse. Otherwise . . . , well you don't want to be Trainee Assistant Cartographer all your life, do you?

As the astute reader may well have surmised by now, *Spindizzy* places you on an unknown world just aching to be mapped. Not an easy task considering there's 429 different sections to be explored and recorded. Gerald is an intelligent beast equipped with the latest in scenery interpretation software. You view the outside world through a scanner and the immediate area is represented as a forced 3D perspective view. There's a bit of an anomaly here in that you can actually see you're own craft even though sat inside it. Still with a bit of practise of the necessary dextral skills it should be quite easy to adjust to this strange point of view. If what you're seeing is a bit awkward, for example Gerald is behind a pillar or something and is proving troublesome to control, then the view can be altered with a mere keypress shifting the view to a different angle. Your scanner tends to simplify the outside world quite a bit and it all looks very angular, the background computer enhanced with an overlaying grid pattern to help the viewer recognise 3D shapes on a 2D screen. At first glance the view seems quite familiar, bearing a resemblance to the arcade game *Marble Madness*.

A major battle in cotrolling Gerald is the inability of his engines to cope with some of the slopes. A good run up to accumulate speed and momentum may well be needed to negotiate some of the hills to be climbed. Gerald controls convincingly and predictably with the joystick: up, down, right and left all moving him around in the appropriate directions. Fire gives a burst of energy, accelerating Gerald rather swiftly in the direction the joystick is held. The major confusing factor is the constant battle against force and momentum.

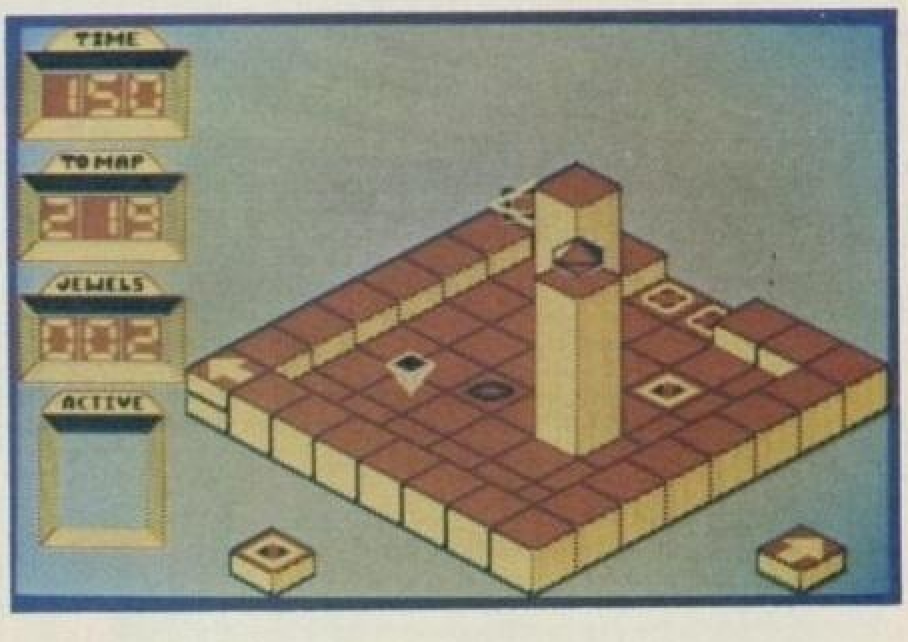
Since the new world is hung in the infinity of space, falling off it is not a sensible idea. Though this situation is not as terminal as it may seem, Gerald will beam himself and you back to the last location visited, but to do this Gerald needs to tap into his power supply resulting in a loss of energy. Flying off an incline allows Gerald to fly into the air and land once again on terra firma. Going too fast off a particularly steep incline will throw Gerald too high into the air and he'll land with quite a bump, a bump large enough to split Gerald into four component parts. Tapping into his energy reserves he's able to reorganise once more, but the energy counter is suitably altered.

Life isn't all bad though,for there are more than a few locations which contain strangely pulsating power crystals. Travel over one of these and your energy bank will flourish. Another counter also keeps track of how many jewels have been collected. The way it works out is that to successfully map the planet all the energy jewels need to be collected, so this counter is quite an accurate indication of your progress.

The alien world contains quite a bit of evidence of previous inhabitants of a very advanced level. Though no longer residing there, their buildings and constructs still live on within the mappable area. Even though very ancient quite a few of the mechanisms still operate. In fact using the lift system is essential to achieve any sort of worthwhile progress. The lift platforms come in a variety of shapes and sizes, most of them prettily patterned in some manner. Painted into the floor at several locations are representations of the lift platforms. When entering the world all lifts are passive, moving over a lift icon on the floor activates any platforms of a similar pattern to the icon. The trouble is that only two types of lift may be activated at any one time. The patterns of activated platforms are displayed on the bottom left hand side of your scanner.

Of course the idea of the game is to map the place and your scanner also carries information showing how many rooms are left to be mapped. If this is not enough then a mere plonk on the M key draws up a map of the planet, locations visited duly highlighted. Tab returns the player to the game.

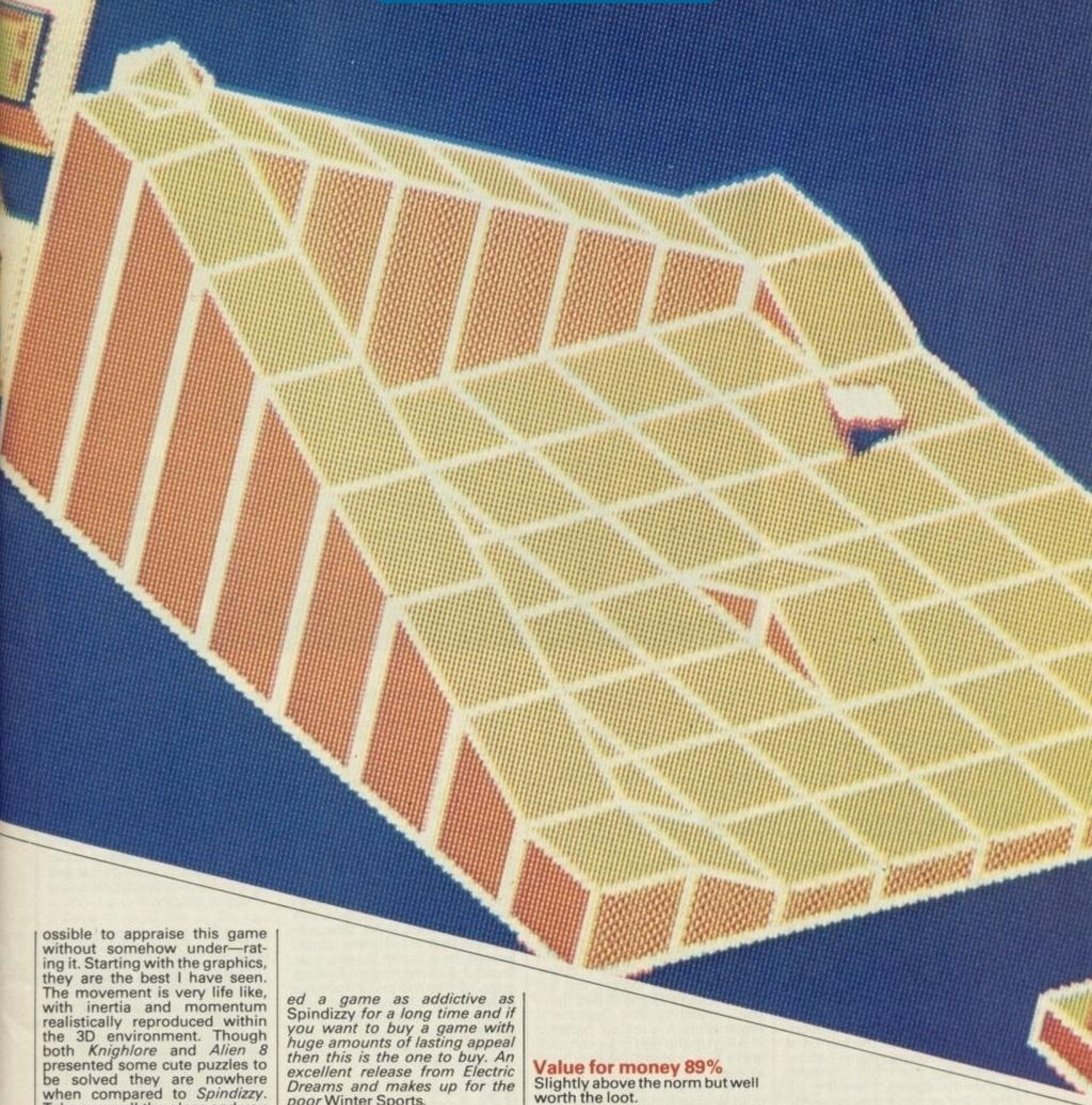
Failure presents itself when the energy is lacking, even if the flesh is willing. The bitter fruits of defeat do have their sweet spots and in *Spindizzy* it's a detailed debriefing of your progress from Gerald. Still you can always try again. As I've said before, no one wants to stay Junior Assistant Cartographer forever!



CRITICISM

1 **I was very disappointed with** *Gyroscope*, **after that I thought the** *Marble Madness* **arcade game would be impossible to convert to the Amstrad - but Electric Dreams have done wonders and produced a game that would still be good after a few months hard playing.** *Spin Dizzy* **is the best game I've played on the Amstrad (and that's saying something), graphics are brilliant with a colour option and even a item option and a host of other features that contribute to the whole addictiveness of the game. A tune is left out which seems to me to be a good step in the direction of speed and inertia - but the spot effects are very good - I even found a room where I could play a great little tune by gliding over lots of different objects, I've not had so much fun for ages. Everything about this game is fantastic - loads of options, loads of colour and loads of game. I don't usually have the chance to play games in my spare time, but I think I'll make an exception in** *Spin Dizzy's* **case.**

2 After the abysmal *Winter Sports*, Electric Dreams have certainly pulled their act together with the absolutely amazing *Spindizzy*. It is imp-



ossible to appraise this game without somehow under—rating it. Starting with the graphics, they are the best I have seen. The movement is very life like, with inertia and momentum realistically reproduced within the 3D environment. Though both *Knighlore* and *Alien 8* presented some cute puzzles to be solved they are nowhere when compared to *Spindizzy*. Take away all the gloss and you are still left with an excellent game, the solving of which may keep many a gamester up into the wee hours of the morning. *Spindizzy* is a truly outstanding release and will probably be used as a yardstick for future Amstrad releases.

3 Spindizzy *is quite simply one of THE most impressive games I have seen on ANY home micro. The graphics are really amazing with excellent* Marble Madness *style backgrounds and sprites. The sound is superb with excellent spot FX, although there is no music. The game is on a par with the graphics and sound, and it is quite simply excellent. I haven't played a game as addictive as* Spindizzy *for a long time and if you want to buy a game with huge amounts of lasting appeal then this is the one to buy. An excellent release from Electric Dreams and makes up for the poor* Winter Sports.

Presentation 97%
Useful demonstration and help modes.

Graphics 98%
Highly attractive and very effective 3D graphics.

Sound 88%
Very rewarding spot effects when objects are collected.

Playability 98%
Instantly playable, even at mindless level.

Addictive qualities 98%
Should never gather dust.

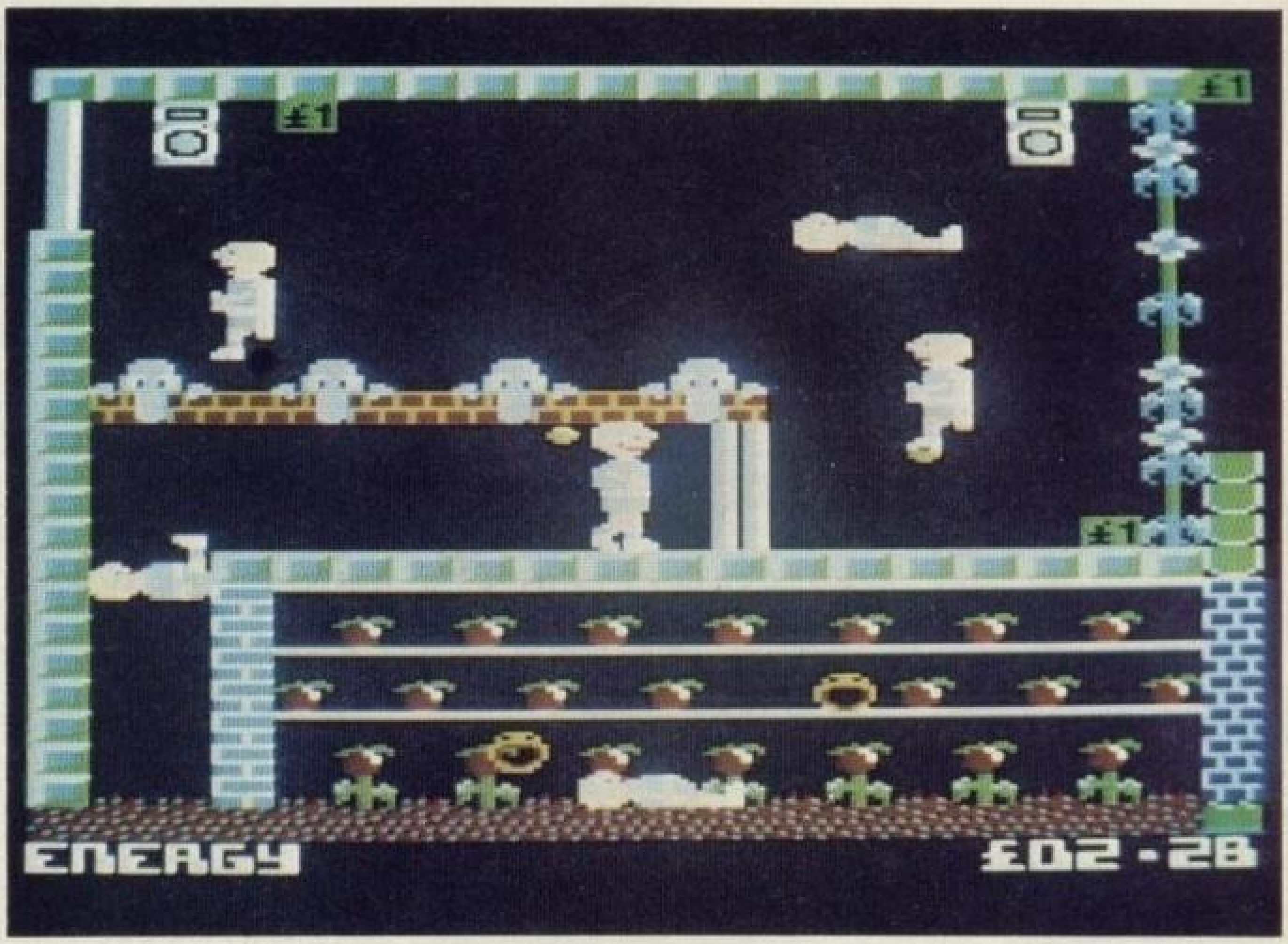
Value for money 89%
Slightly above the norm but well worth the loot.

Overall 98%
The best yet? unless you know better.

AN AMTIX! ACCOLADE

TUBARUBA

£7.95 cass
Author: Tooba Zaida



Tubaruba is the nickname acquired by a young school lad who is by far the most infamous in his school. Throughout his school career Tuba has annoyed and pestered his schoolmasters with pranks and antics. Up till now the teachers have tolerated Tuba's far from agreeable behaviour, mainly because they haven't been able to catch him in the act of performing any nefarious deeds. That was until the headmaster caught him in the act of smashing a school window. Seeing this is an excuse to expel the disagreeable lad, the headmaster gave Tuba an ultimatum, either collect fifty pounds to cover the damage he has caused or be expelled instantly. If Tuba had decided to plump for expulsion then this wouldn't be much of a game. Luckily he decided to attempt to collect the vast sum of money and so confident was the headmaster that the young lad will fail he even bet his Ferrari!.

Tuba's school is a very strange place indeed. Along with the standard issue grey shorts and blue top for school uniform is a battery powered jet pack. Also standard issue is a chewing gum gun for blowing up any obstacles. That isn't the strange part, that's all quite normal considering the other inhabitants of the school building. Apart from other pupils there's also a healthy colony of demonic type creatures whose touch is far from beneficial. Nasties that plague Tuba's progress include fatty homing hunchbacks, bomb dropping cherubs, spiders (big 'uns), ducks most evil and other entities that do their best to defy description.

Tubaruba is in fact an arcade adventure and not a revolutionary at all and takes the format of a million such programs before. Controlling the main character about the screen, travelling off the edge causes a new screen to flip into view. Tuba can be made to fly through the air, jet pack powered, or trot along the floor, biped powered. The jet pack is activated by pushing up and then using left or right. Leave the joystick central and Tuba floats, gravity aided, to the nearest bit of terra firma.

Backpacking and walking aren't the only mode of transport, somewhere around the school sits a C5 that can be hopped into. Strangely this recharges any deficiency in the battery department.

Most of the time it's best to use the backpack but its power demand saps your batteries. Having charged batteries is quite important, let them go low and the games over. Jet packing is not the only battery sapping pastime that Tuba can take part in, firing off bursts from his gum gun drains power. It's worth it though, just to see the psychadelic explosions of anything that gets gummed.

Bumping into nasties is definitely not advised as a big chunk of power falls off the energy bar depicting the battery status. Some static creatures, sitting innocently, also drain energy if Tuba is too close.

Cash is left in two denominations, pound notes and five penny coins, it's easy to collect just guide Tuba over it. Admittedly *Tubaruba* doesn't claim anywhere to be logical, but for some totally unexplained reason collecting red hammers replenishes a slacking battery. Picking up the odd coke can and sticky bun is also quite benificial as well.

The game is over once fifty quid is safely in the coffers, fail and a grade is handed out commenting on your achievement. So you'd better do well because nothing's worse than a bad report.

Control keys:

CRITICISM

1 **I first played this game on a green screen monitor and was amazed at how effective the colours were in presenting the game to a green Amstrad user. On loading I was presented with the High-Score table with balls bouncing all over it, complemented by some of the best two—channel music I've heard to date on the Amstrad. The game itself is very *Pyjamarama*-ish, but the speed and fast reactions you need to play it are just amazing — but strangely are easy to get used to. Tubaruba is a funny sort of schoolkid who has the amazing power of being able to fly. One of the game's best features was the energy bar — only one life which is how it should be. Some great touches are that when you go for a drive in the C5 you get your energy replenished, and are allowed to gain new vigour for you quest for 50 quid. My only complaint with this program is that sometimes when I landed in a room I was confronted with three good-looking guys, all like me and it took me quite a while to work out who was who. Tubaruba is a great game which is well worth buying — even if only for the superb sound.**

2 Though immediately impressed with the delightful, though somewhat excessive, use of colour, I quickly started to get bored of this game. Great fun though it is to zoom around ogling at the very impressive explosions, after a while the appeal palls. Playing the game as it is meant to be played is very dull indeed. Graphically *Tubaruba* is quite impressive, some of the backgrounds are very pretty indeed. The speed things happen is very varied, velocity of anything moving being decided on how many other objects are zooming around. Very clumsy indeed. Though not over impressed I can see its appeal to arcade adventure freaks but it just didn't thrill me at all.

3 *Though not bad, I couldn't rate* Tubaruba *as anything exceptional. Colourful it is, enjoyable it isn't. There is a vague mindless appeal to it, zapping the nasties and seeing them explode into a myriad of pixels isn't a bad way to pass the time. I wouldn't pay for the privilege though. When it comes down to it* Tubaruba *is an exceedingly simple game that isn't really worth anyone's time of day or money.*

Presentation 83%
Consistently pleasant though no exceptional features present.

Graphics 91%
Very colourful and usually quite pretty. Definitely the game's best point

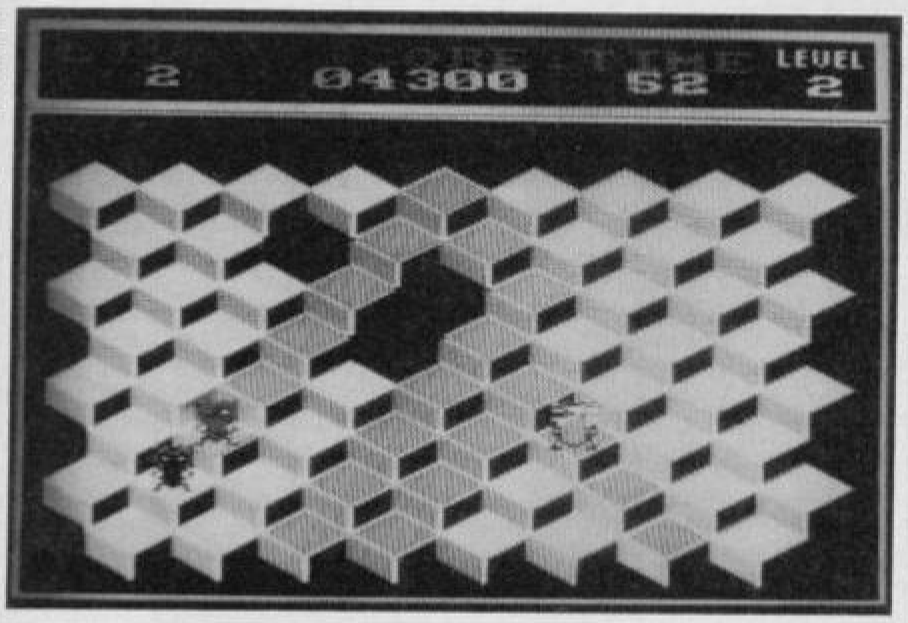
Sound 82%
Very good tune though the sound effects rattle a bit.

Playability 81%
Instantly fun with easy and satisfying control modes.

Addictive qualities 71%
Long term appeal is a little lack lustre though may well please arcade adventurers.

Value for money 79%
Worthwhile though better bargains can be found.

Overall 85%
A nice little game that competently represents it genre.



SCREWBALL

Blue Ribbon, £2.50 cass
Author:

Poor old Screwball! He's suddenly found himself on a series of coloured terraces and he's in a predicament for there are four horribly evil Black Bugs after his blood.

Jumping from terrace to terrace changes their colour, and what ol' Screwy babes has to do is change them all to another colour. When he does he's given a few seconds reprieve from being chased whilst the computer sets up another, more difficult screen.

On the first screen everything is quite slow and the Black Bugs trudge after our hero in a very half-hearted fashion.In later screens life, or rather the preservation of life, is a far more difficult task and the BB's fair zoom around the terraces in search of Screw's blood. Just to make life a little more miserable to the harmless little chappie, gaps start to appear in the terraces and he can easily find himself cornered if he's not careful.

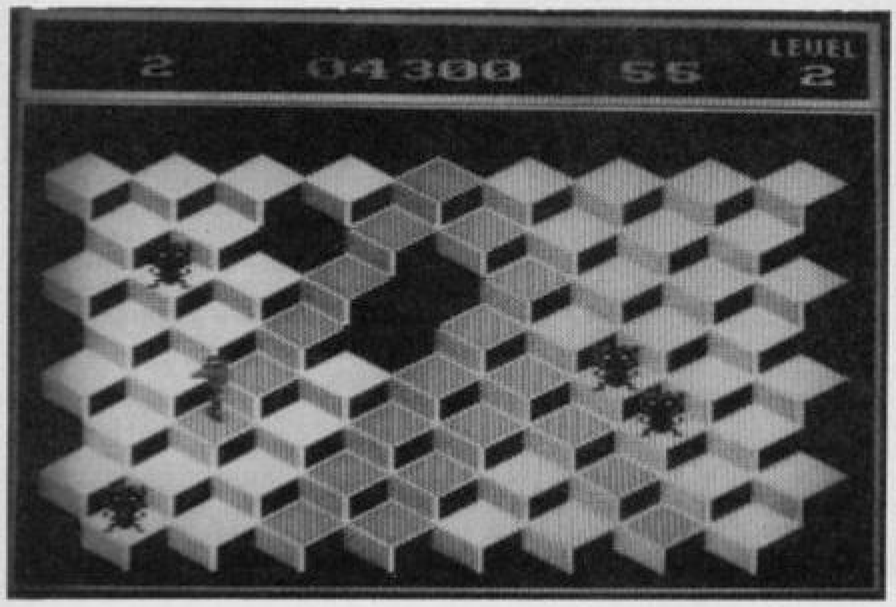
Luckily he's not totally defenceless and can dig holes for the horrible denizens to fall into. If all else fails then a quick tap on the RETURN key will result in his being hyperspaced back to the top of the screen. This last ditch attempt to save a life isn't a guaranteed success, and there's only a 50/50 chance Screwball will survive the hyperspace process.

Each screen has a 60 second time limit and if it's not completed within that time then one of your five lives is lost and the screen has to be started over again. If it all seems too hard then don't worry, an extra life is earned after completing each level.

Control keys: A: up left, Z: down right, CLOSE SQUARE BRACKET: up right, /:down left, RETURN: hyperspace, SPACE: dig hole, DELETE: freeze game, COPY: unfreeze game

CRITICISM

1 **I find it very difficult to become at all enthusiastic over a game which graced most home micros over two years ago. *Screwball* is a very second rate version of *Q-Bert* and doesn't have either the cuteness or playability of the cult arcade game. The graphics are poor and the Amstrad takes ages and ages to set up a new screen. The sound is non-existent and so's the animation on the characters. Even at £2.50 the game is overpriced, especially when you consider other software companies offer far better quality and more original games at a cheaper price.**



BLUE RIBBON
SCREWBALL
AMSTRAD

2 I'm afraid this is a very poor copy of the popular arcade game and is no where near as addictive as the original.It seemed to take years to set up a new screen and once you had played it there did not appear to be any reason to give it a re-run. No sound or animation on the characters and in my view an overpriced game even if it does sell for just £2.50.

3 *The central character of this game is a little screwball who is desperately trying to avoid the menacing black bugs while treading on all of the tiles.As an aid you can dig holes for the unsuspecting bugs to drop into. An interesting feature of the game is being greeted by a tune and a set of instructions on the screen as the game is being loaded. The graphics are only average but the colours do add to the enjoyment of the game. Quite good value for money*

Presentation 61%
Of a reasonable standard but nothing to get excited about.

Graphics 51%
Simple characters and very slow in setting up the screen.

Sound 25%
What sound?

Playability 32%
Dead easy to play, but very, very repetitive.

Addictive qualities 34%
The antique scenario soon becomes boring.

Value for money 31%
Cheap, but not good value.

Overall 30%
Even ageing *Q-Bert* fans would soon become bored by this.

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WHO DARES WINS II

Alligata, £7.95 cass
Author: Steve Evans

Fancy taking the role of a sole commando armed with only a machine gun and a few grenades with the task of capturing eight enemy outposts against massive opposition? Well, with the latest release from Alligata you now can. *Who Dares Wins II* puts you in that exact situation where, with adrenalin flowing, you are put in a position where kill or be killed is the only option.

The action takes place over a flick screen, detailed landscape where you have to progress up the screen. When you reach the top of the screen the screen changes and puts you at the bottom of the next section of landscape. The idea of the game is simply to reach and destroy the outpost found at the end of each section of landscape.

When you start the game you are really put in at the deep end. Shattered buildings lie each side of you and the only choice is to go forward across the bare and blasted landscape.

As you can expect the landscape is absolutely infested with the enemy — these blue and brown uniformed soldiers emerge from the sides of the screen, jumping off buildings or runnng out from behind trees and instantly start attacking you. Luckily their country isn't too hot on the technological scene and they're only armed with single shot rifles. Your brilliant sub machine gun is capable of pounding out around three rounds a second making life a little easier. Even so, the sheer number of the enemy is sometimes overwhelming.

Across the landscape are scattered many hazards and traps and caution is needed when the screen flicks to the next section of landscape — sometimes there is something hostile just awaiting an overconfident soldier. Quicksand awaits an unwary commando who hasn't got his eyes peeled and pools of water with crumbling banks claim anyone who strays too near their edge.

Other hazards include soldiers with deadly accurate mortars, although they can be disposed of by lobbing one of your limited grenades at them. You start the game with six grenades and more are parachuted in to help you on your way. When they land simply run over the box and another three grenades are added to your total.

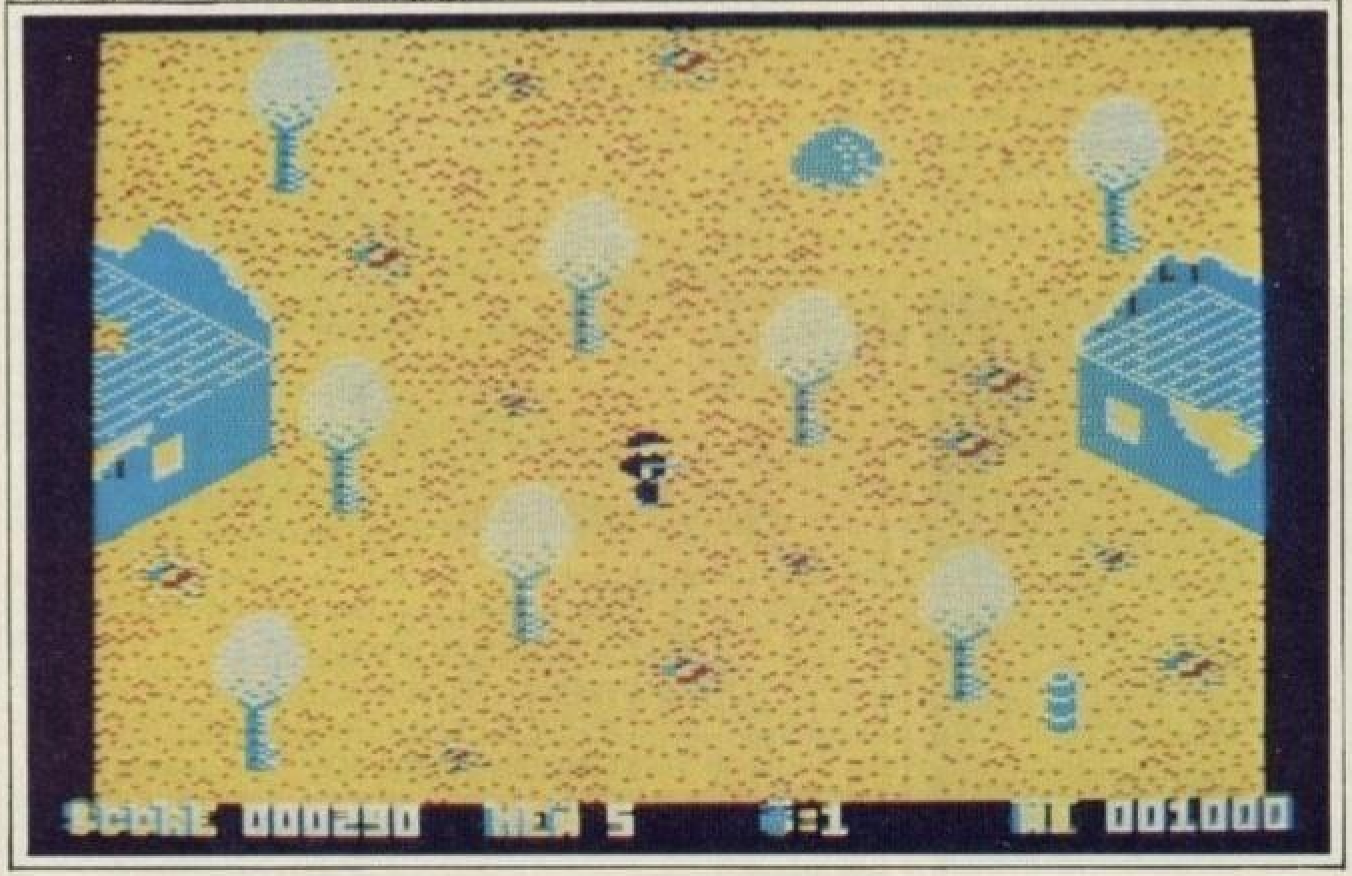
Occasionally you'll come across enemy vehicles, either manually driven or robot controlled. These always move across the screen, although the robot controlled tanks move left and right in an attempt to gain a line with you so they can fire one of their missiles accurately. There are also railway lines which have to be crossed. These are pretty hazardous since little railway carriages trundle along the lines every so often. All these vehicles can be disposed of with a well-aimed grenade and give a nice load of bonus points if successfully destroyed.

The real danger comes from the skies where two types of planes, one which flies across the screen and one which flies down the screen, threaten your existence. The one which flies across the screen drops very accurate bombs (plenty of running and dodging needed here) but the ones that fly down the screen are by far the most deadly. These strafe as they bear down on you at high speed giving you only a split second to react.

Occasionally you'll come across one of your allies. The only trouble is that he's in rather dire straights since he's tied to a post and about to get shot by a soldier. Shooting his would-be executioner gains a points bonus and your fellow soldier will be saved.

As you approach the outpost there are rivers with tiny bridges which are the only way across. You have to shoot the soldiers on the far side if you are to get across safely since a single accurate shot from them as you cross spells certain doom. Sometimes soldiers in boats patrol these waters although they don't pose any threat to your soldier.

When the outpost is finally reached many soldiers pour from it and a pitched battle, with you in the middle, ensues. It's then up to your skill and reflexes to survive. If you manage to kill all the soldiers then the outpost will be declared yours and you'll automatically go forward to tackle the next, and far more treacherous mission.



WHO DARES
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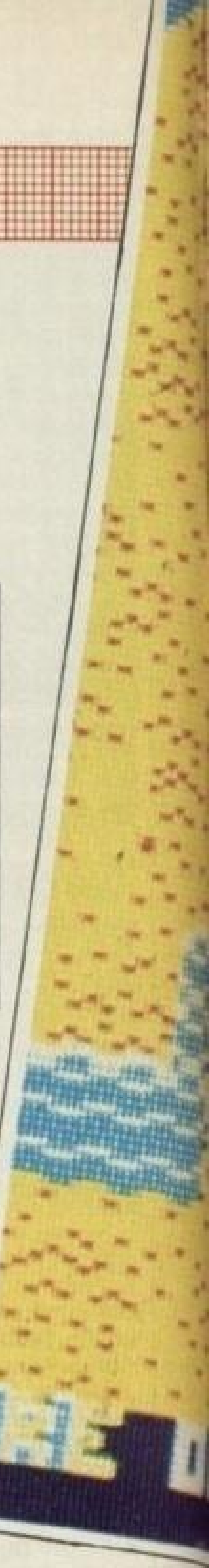


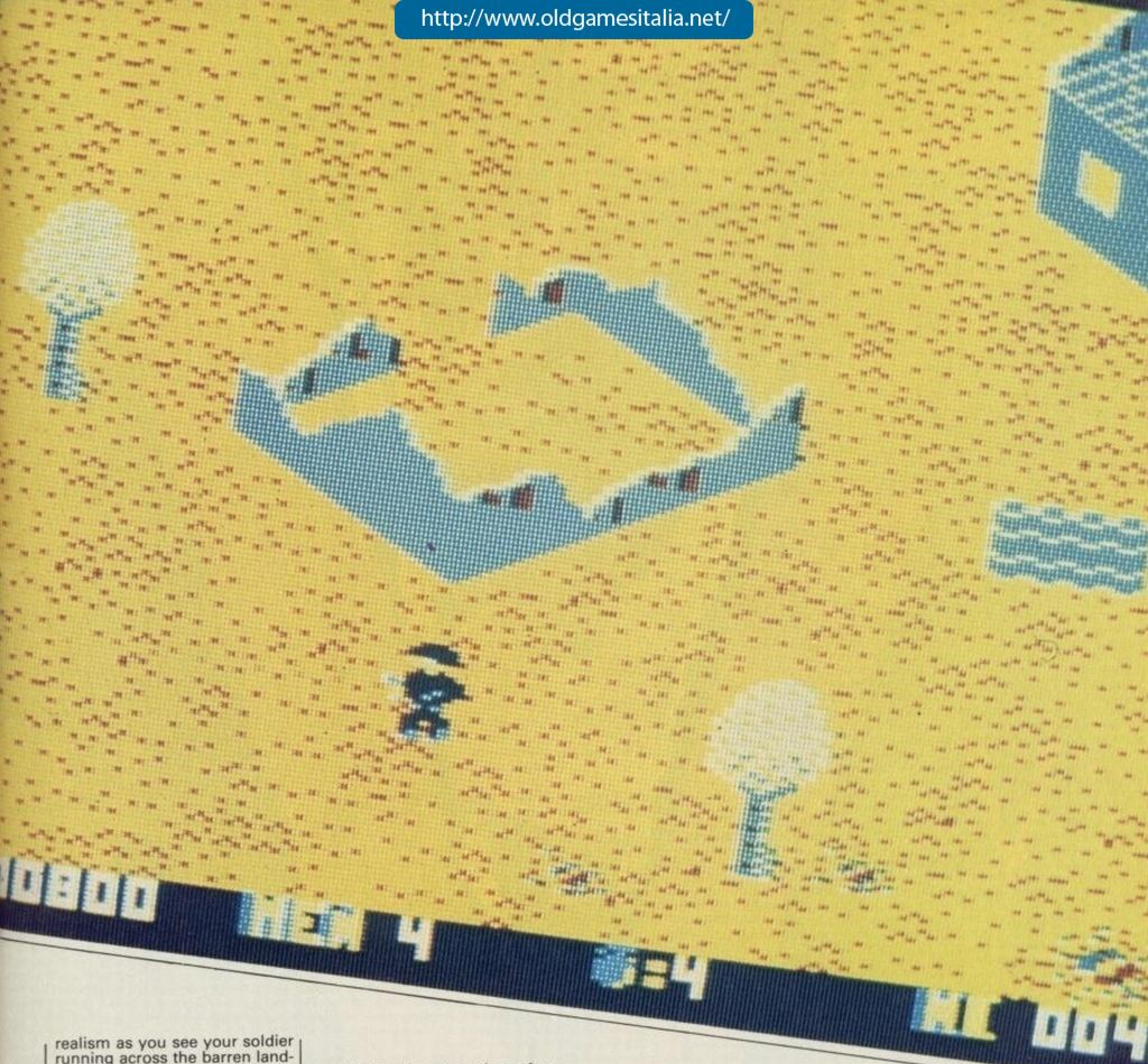
On later levels soldiers,in potholes and a far more hazardous landscape, try to lessen your already slim chances of survival.

You start the game with five lives although extra ones can be earned at regular point intervals.

CRITICISM

1 **This is a great little game and one which is very welcome considering the lack of action arcade games on the Amstrad. The flick screen system works pretty well and adds another hazard to a budding hero — you have no indication what is coming next and often it's very easy to go tumbling into a river or pothole if you're not careful. The graphics are very nice and the semi 3D works really well. If you're an hungry amster looking for an excellent arcade game then look no further than this.**

2 *Who Dares Wins II* is an excellent arcade game for shoot em up addicts. The game is initially very easy, although from the second level onwards things start to become tough. The graphics are very good and give a nice feeling of



realism as you see your soldier running across the barren landscape. Another nice thing is the very short loading time and it makes me wonder whether other companies can speed up cassette loading time. Alligata haven't put any options on the title screen and there is no joystick/keyboard choice (it's joystick only) but this doesn't detract from the game at all. Overall this is a brilliant shoot em up which should bring hours of pleasure to fans of this type of game.

3 *I love the good ole shoot 'em ups so when* Who Dares Wins 11 *came in you can be sure that I was one of the first to have a go. The first thing that struck me about it was how slow it was- I almost felt like my man didn't really want to blow up everyone in sight, he didn't seem to trudge around with any urgency. The first stage is very easy and after a while I got a bit sick of seeing lots of little men die with their hands outstreched in pure agony. One thing I thought was very good was that each outpost has a few more men and an few extra things to cope with- like planes and men up against the firing squad (very cruel). I thought this game was a cool translation of the old 'Commando' arcade game and a good choice if you can't wait for Elite's Commando attempt.*

Presentation 69%
No keyboard option, but on-screen presentation very nice.

Graphics 89%
Plenty of variety in the landscapes and lots of enemy hacking about.

Sound 49%
Spot FX and a rather short ditty from 'Bridge on the River Kwai' on the title screen.

Playability 94%
Although rather gory, killing the enemy is fun.

Addictive qualities 95%
Capturing the eighth outpost is a highly desireable (and difficult) target.

Value for money 90%
Average price for an excellent shoot em up.

Overall 91%
Just what the doctor ordered.

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HYPERSPORTS

Imagine, £8.95 cass

Here it is at last . . . the long awaited *Hyper Sports*. The game was a follow up to the huge arcade (and much copied) hit *Track and Field*. There is the same system of scoring and the same gameplay still applies. In each event you have a target which you have to reach to qualify. If you don't meet this requirement your game will end. If,on the other hand, you do you'll automatically move on to the next event.

Hyper Sports is a copy from the arcade game barring only one aspect, the pole vaulting event. Why this has happened is unknown but six of the events are there.

The game kicks off with an exhausting freestyle swimming event. This is similar in style to the 110 metre hurdles in *Track and Field* where you belt along hurling your joystick from side to side. When the prompt 'breathe' comes up press the fire button, but don't leave it too long otherwise your man will slow up completely. Don't press the fire button when your man's head is under water because, not surprisingly, this causes him to cough and splutter and slow up for ages (enough to cost you the race).

Once the swimming is over it's time to go outside for the skeet shooting. Your man sits at the bottom centre of the screen with a double barrelled shotgun in his hand. He aims the gun automatically and it is represented by two floating boxes on the screen. As the skeets move through them press left or right to fire one of the barrels. After you have done the event his face goes through a series of gruesome colour changes and his eyeballs flash.

The horse vaulting comes next. Your competitor automatically runs up to the springboard. When you reach it the skill takes over — press fire when you do and he bounces onto the horse, wait until he's doing a horizontal hand stand then press fire button again and wiggle the joystick around. This causes him to somersault — the more somersaults you do the better your score.

If you manage to get through that you have to turn the cassette over and load the other side . . .

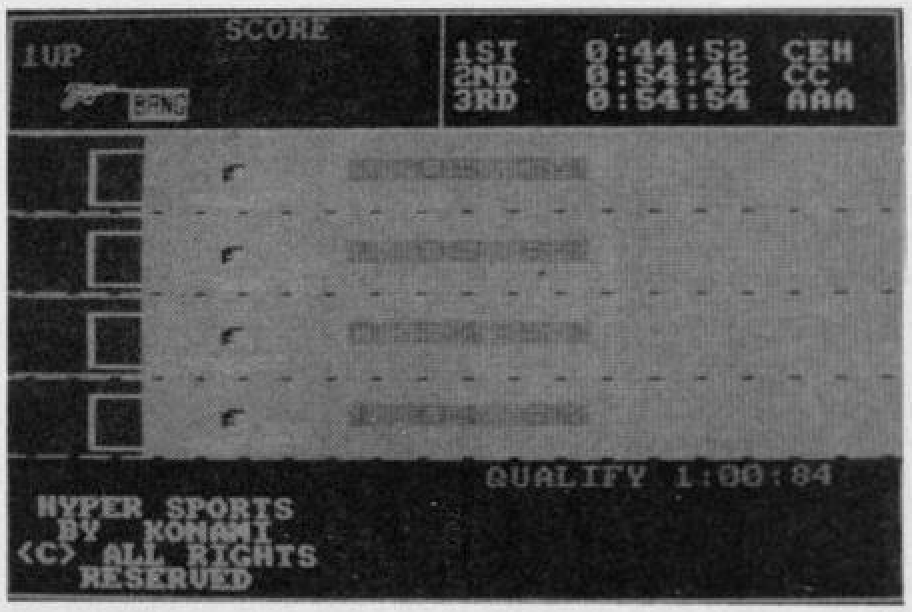
After that spot of bother comes the nice and relaxing archery event. Pick your wind speed with the fire button and you're off. A target is winched down the screen and you have to decide when to release your arrow and at what angle it should be shot. It all sounds really complex but is in fact easy to do.

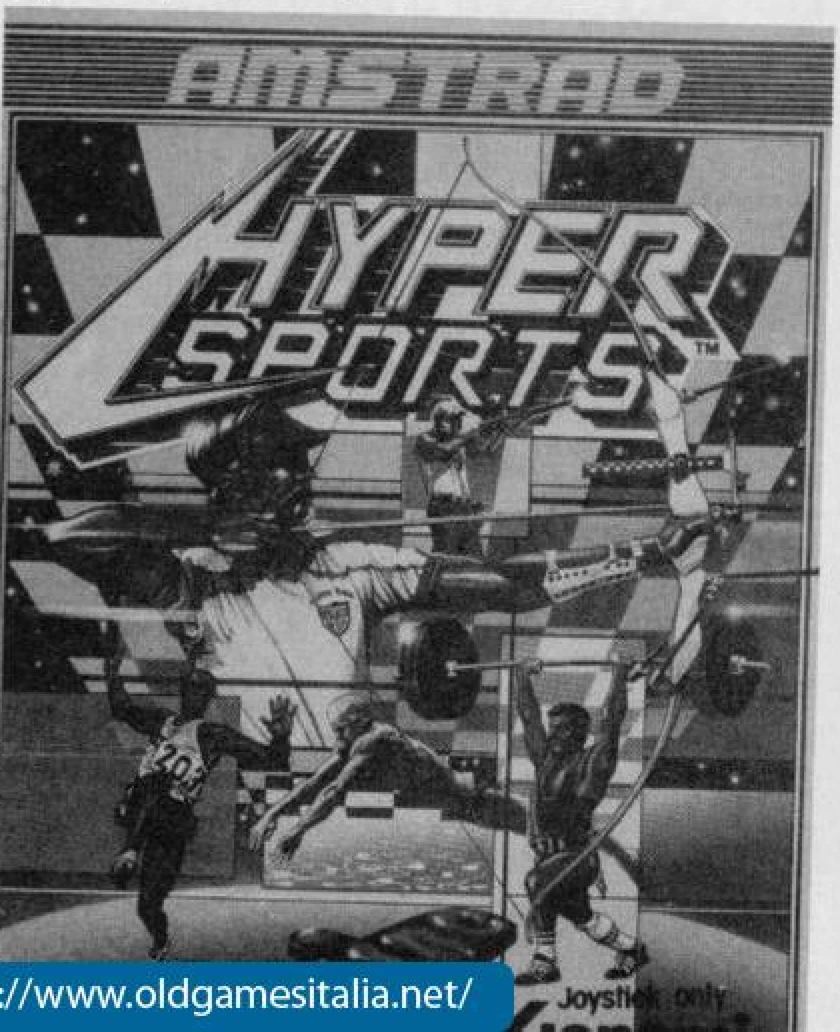
After the Robin Hood impersonation comes the triple jump. Your man automatically runs up to the line,and when he gets there you have to press the fire button trying to get as near as possible to 45 degrees. Repeat twice for the step and the jump. It's quite tricky getting the timing but once mastered some huge jumps are possible.

The final event is weightlifting where you choose the weight you want by moving the joystick left or right and pressing fire. To lift the weight try to mash the joystick until the weightlifter flashes. When he does press fire, this 'snatches' the weight above his head. Keep on pummelling the stick until the judges' lights all go white (forget your wrist is being held together by two ligaments and a bit of stringy flesh). If they go white it's a successful lift.

Once that is over it's back to the swimming again only this time all the qualifying targets have been upped.

Control keys: Joystick only





CRITICISM

1 **After the long, long wait *Hypersports* finally arrives — and what a disappointment it is. The program has a lot of faults,for instance there are no key options — a bad presentation point. I played the arcade game a hell of a lot and this program fails to capture much of the spirit of the original. The game plays badly, some of the events haven't been properly looked at and are therefore inaccurate (triple jump, archery, skeet shooting). The graphics are very disappointing, with poorly defined sprites, slo-o-o-w and wobbly scrolling and pretty basic backgrounds.They should have been a lot better considering the Amstrad's colour potential.*Yie ar Kung Fu* was brilliant but this game is poor.**

2 After the amazing *Yie ar Kung Fu* I expected great things of this, but *Hyper sports* was disappointing. The game has loads of faults and each event has one or two niggles which add up to make it an unenjoyable game. The swimming is pathetic — if you waggle the joystick really quickly the program doesn't seem to be able to handle it and the man stops. The second event is almost unplayable and shooting down the skeets is nearly impossible. How I qualified is a mystery. The horse vaulting is a joke — the man trundles up to the horse at a slow rate and does his somersault bit.Once again if you go too fast your man stops spinning. After loading the next three events (*Hypersports* was crammed into the Spectrum, why not an Amstrad) the archery turns up. All the angles are wrong and there's no wind indicator. The next event, the triple jump, is stupid. The man runs up to the board and goes into a slide and suddenly a foul is called. There's no indication of where to jump from or anything. This discipline suffers again from the 'no reaction to joystick' syndrome an it is hard to qualify.

3 *On loading up, the first event seemed to be alright, but it was the second event, the skeet shooting, that really changed my mind. The joystick simply refused to respond to any of my efforts. Only after smashing away for a while did I get any sign of life at all. The graphics are terrible — the animation on the characters is abysmal, not more than two or three frames in most cases.*

Presentation 41%
No keys option and multiloader

Graphics 39%
Poor sprites, feeble animation, wobbly and slow scrolling and poor use of colour.

Sound 26%
One or two jingles and little else.

Playability 29%
If you've seen the arcade game this will not impress you.

Addictive qualities 22%
Too many niggles to make it fun.

Value for money 21%
Too little action for your pennies.

Overall 30%
Very disappointing.

GYROSCOPE

Melbourne House, £8.95 cass
Author: Tony Mack and Steve Lamb

Gyroscope puts you in a similar surrealistic situation to the arcade classic *Marble Madness*. The basic gameplay is very simple — you take control of a gyroscope with the task of getting from the starting post at the top of the course to the finishing post at the bottom within the allotted time. Each time the gyroscope topples, a life is lost. The course is very strange, presented with a surrealistic 3D effect featuring tall geometric buildings, ramps and steep slopes along and around which you have to guide your gyroscope. The course also provides a home for some rather strange (and vaguely familiar) aliens whose touch topples your spinner.

There are five courses in the run, each containing four screens. When you complete one screen the next part of the course scrolls into view, replacing the section you've just traversed. The whole game is played against a clock, which ticks off the time relentlessly as you try to complete each quartet of screens. Completing each screen earns you bonus points, and completing a course of four screens earns you a bonus related to the amount of time remaining on the clock.

You begin the game with seven lives in store, and pick up a bonus life for each 1,000 points scored. If you fail to complete a screen course within the time limit the gyroscope runs out of spin and a life is lost. If this happens you resume play from the spot you'd reached at time-out with the clock reset to start a new run.

There are some very thin catwalks between the buildings and here the main danger lies. If you stray too near the edge of a construction or catwalk your gyro will become unbalanced and totter over — another life gone. When this happens your gyro is put back to the top of the screen on which you died, and thus time is lost as well as a life.

It takes time to gain proper control of a gyroscope — once you start moving in one direction it takes a while to slow down. The beast will accelerate down slopes, and constant checks have to be made when you trundle downhill to make sure you're not going too fast — if there's a sharp turn at the bottom you could find yourself in deep trouble, and run out of road.

Inanimate hazards on the course complicate matters further, and include glass slopes (which send you spinning in all directions), knobbly floors (which makes control of your gyro next to impossible), red discs (which send you completely out of control) and directional floors (which act like slopes only they're flat).

The landscapes are very deviously created; starting from relatively easy they get more tricky. Some of the difficult courses contain thin catwalks, horrendous slopes with tight corners, holes in the floor and combinations of all these with the aforementioned hazards — being a gyroscope isn't all just spinning around.

CRITICISM

1

I looked forward to playing this game, but must confess to being disappointed with it. The background graphics on this are quite nice, until they move that is, and then they become all wobbly. The sound is rather grating, doesn't really fit the game and seems totally out of place with the surreal landscape. The control of the gyro is difficult and very fiddly and a lot of the time it seems to have a mind of its own. If you're a real *Marble Madness* freak then you might just get some fun out of playing it, but for most others they'll soon find themselves becoming bored and frustrated.

2

The whole concept of the game is very simple but fiendishly addictive and requires ages of practice and dedication to get through the whole game. Although the game is very addictive I'm afraid it is just tooooo slooowww for my liking. Presentation is very colourful and has obviously had a lot of time spent on the shading and design of the maze. Every screen is scrolled up very neatly but again much too slowly, and results in the temporary loss of your gyroscope - which means you have to keep an eagle eye on your gyroscope and the surrounding scenery all the time. The tune of the game is nice but too slow and is played all through the game resulting in two main problems; speed of course is the main one but you also you lose the 'loss of life' effects which were seen on the other two versions. Overal1 *Gyroscope* has some good looks about it but suffers from not enough sound FX and too slow a game.

3

Gyroscope *is a step back from the otherwise high standards of Melbourne House's software.* Exploding Fist *was great,* Fighting Warrior *not bad and logically enough* Gyroscope *is awful. It wouldn't be so bad if it was original, but no, the game is merely a rip off of the excellent arcade game* Marble Madness. *It seems to have lost rather a lot in the translation though, such minor details as gameplay, attractive graphics and many other features present on the original. It wouldn't even be fair to recommend this release to ardent fans of the arcade version, their only response would be disappointment. I hope Melbourne House learn by their mistakes and make the most of* Rock and Wrestle *when it comes out.*

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M
Melbourne House
GYROSCOPE

Presentation 64%
Nothing special and the time between pressing the start button and starting is awfully long.

Graphics 81%
Pretty backdrops, although the scrolling in between screens is rather wobbly.

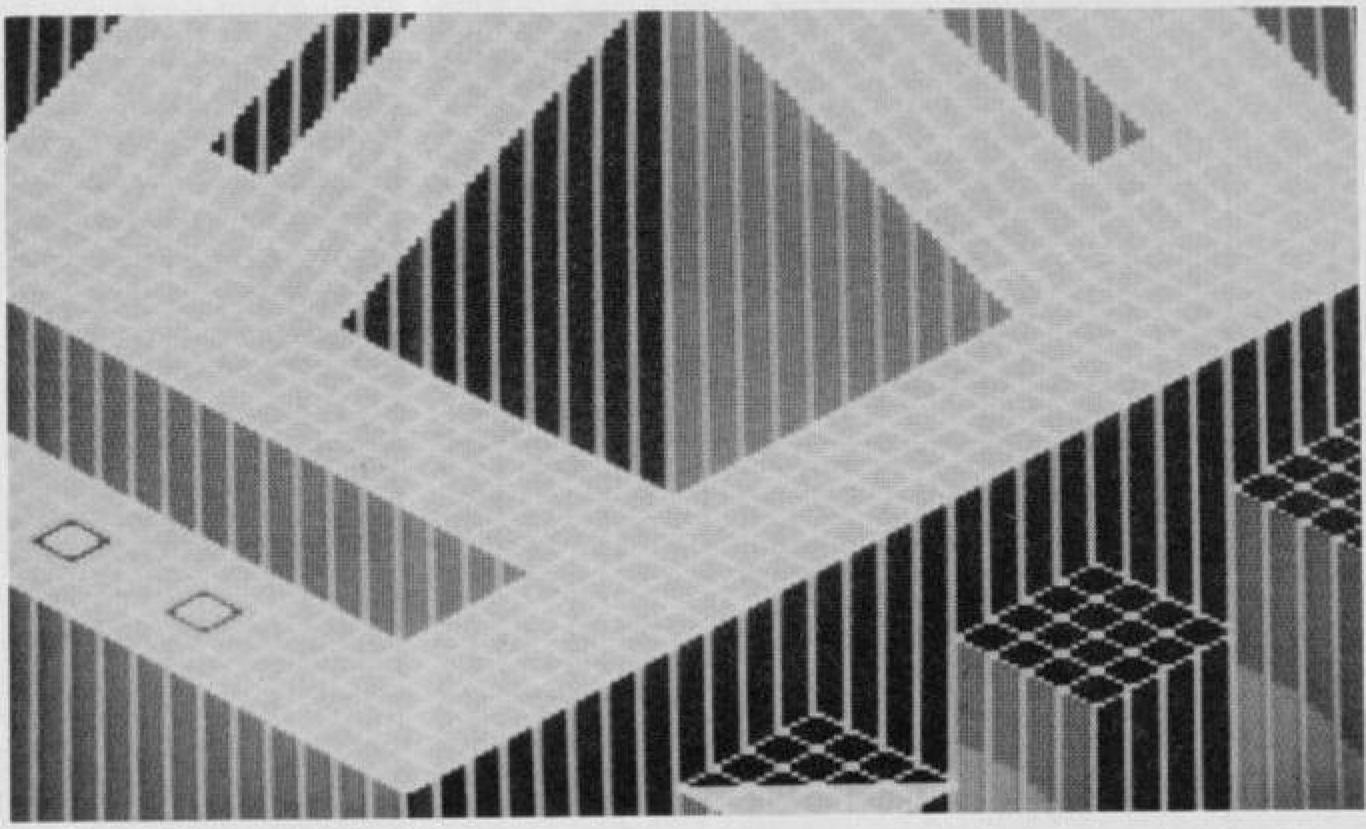
Sound 53%
A rather grating tune which goes on and on.

Playability 46%
ontrolling the gyro is highly difficult, especially with keys . . .

Addictive qualities 67%
..And because of this the game swiftly becomes highly frustrating.

Value for money 62%
Overpriced for what it has to offer.

Overall 67%
A disappointing conversion.



CASTLE ASSAULT

Blue Ribbon, £2.50 cass

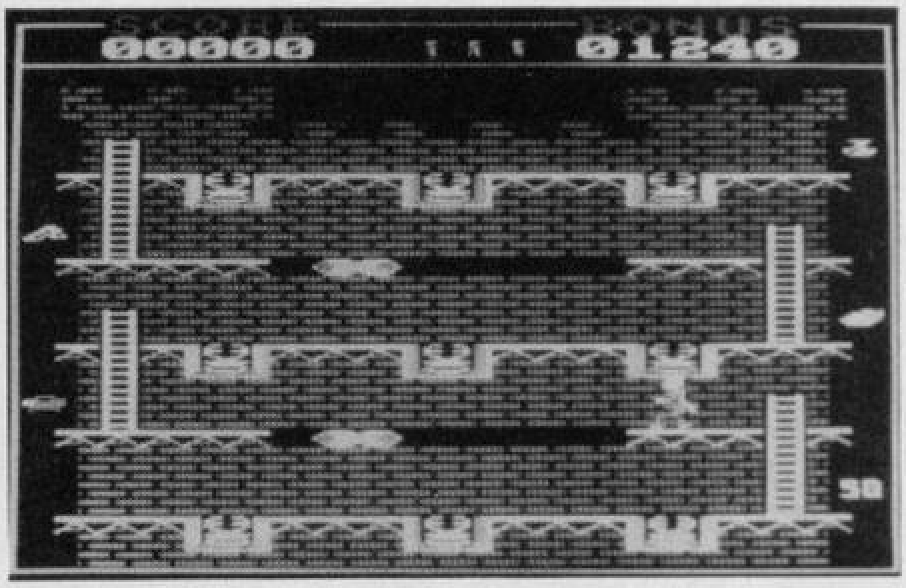
This is a simple platform game where the object is to get to the top of the screen and collect the bag of gold which resides there. Now, as you can expect, the owners of the castle haven't left the gold unguarded and the way to fortune is a most treacherous one and danger constantly rears its ugly head — while all the time a clock ticks away. If you fail to reach your goal within the time allowed you will lose a life, but success will mean that the time remaining is converted into lots of lovely points.

The screen is split into five floors and there are ladders connecting each level. Your character starts at the bottom left hand corner of the screen and has to make his way along the bottom level to reach the ladder. There are three pits in the floor in which squat, toad like creatures reside and your man has to jump over them safely to be able to reach the ladder. Be jolly careful, though, because the creatures occasionally leap up and can headbut a player leaping over the pit with his legs open. The upshot of this, if it happens, is that you will lose one of your five lives.

If you reach the ladder safely then that can be ascended to the next level. The hazard on this level is a large hole. The only way across this is to leap on and off the moving platform which shuttles backwards and forwards. This is quite tricky, but if successfully negotiated you can climb the next ladder up to the third floor. This is identical to the first and level four is the same as two. The final floor goes back to the first screen formula and if all three nasties are jumped then the bag of gold is yours for the taking.

After that you're moved onto another screen, identical in every respect apart from the nasties. This time instead of being squat and loathesome they're horribly frightening blue serpents which leap up and down in the most horrifying manner.

There are four prizes which can be collected on each screen, just simply run over them for a massive fifty point bonus.



Control keys: Z: left, X: right, SQUARE CLOSE BRACKET: up, /: down, ENTER: jump

CRITICISM

1 **I really can't believe that a software company can release such unambitous material as this — the last time I saw a game as bad as this was on the Tandy TRS 80. The single screen is incredibly boring to play, and the only thing that changes after completing a screen is the thingies which jump out at you. The inlay says 'fantastic animation and highly realistic sound constitute this truly stunning and imaginative game' which is rubbish. The animation is two or three frames at the most and the sound boils down to a few forelorn parps. If you want to buy a game that even a PET owner would laugh at buy this.**

2 *Castle Assault* is the worst game I've ever seen on the Amstrad- I thought these games had gone out with the ZX81's, but obviously they

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are now coming back into fashion (well Blue Ribbon Software hope so). The only good thing that I can say about *Castle Assault* is it is colourful - well not that colourful . . . Well it's pretty basic actually. In the inlay it say's that it's got brilliant animation and highly realistic sound effects - Well they're lying. The controls are very hard to get used to and even when you've mastered them they come up with some strange results. So you'd better not buy it 'cos you'll be upset and you might cry.

3 Castle Assault *is another failure from Blue Ribbon. Its graphics,sound and colour are terrible. It isn't interesting to play and only people drunk, insane or stupid would buy this. Save your pennies for another game. I've seen better games for Vic 20's and that's saying something.*

Presentation 59%
Very few options but was at least attractive.

Graphics 17%
The graphics are inferior to those of other budget titles.

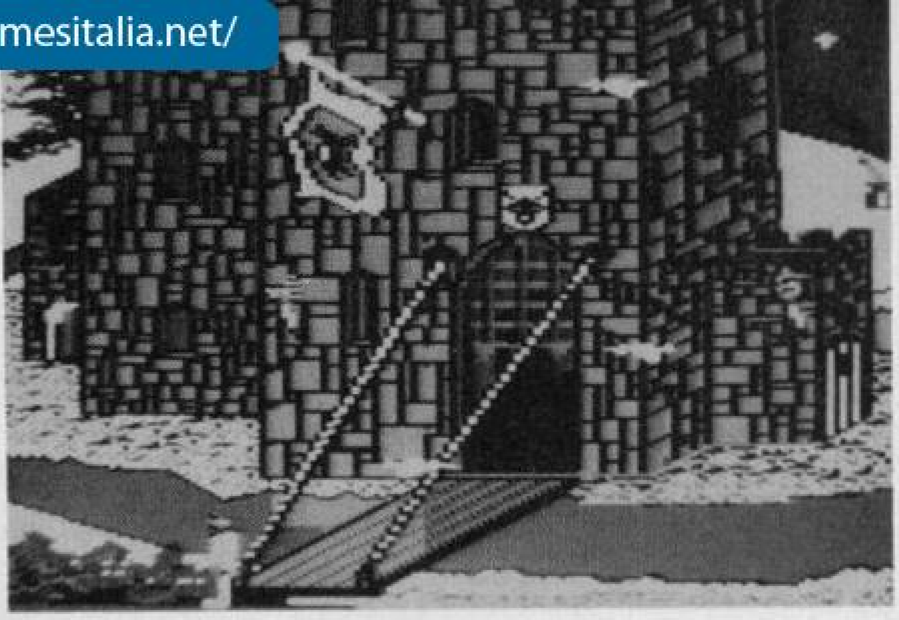
Sound 19%
Player needs more imagination than the programmer used.

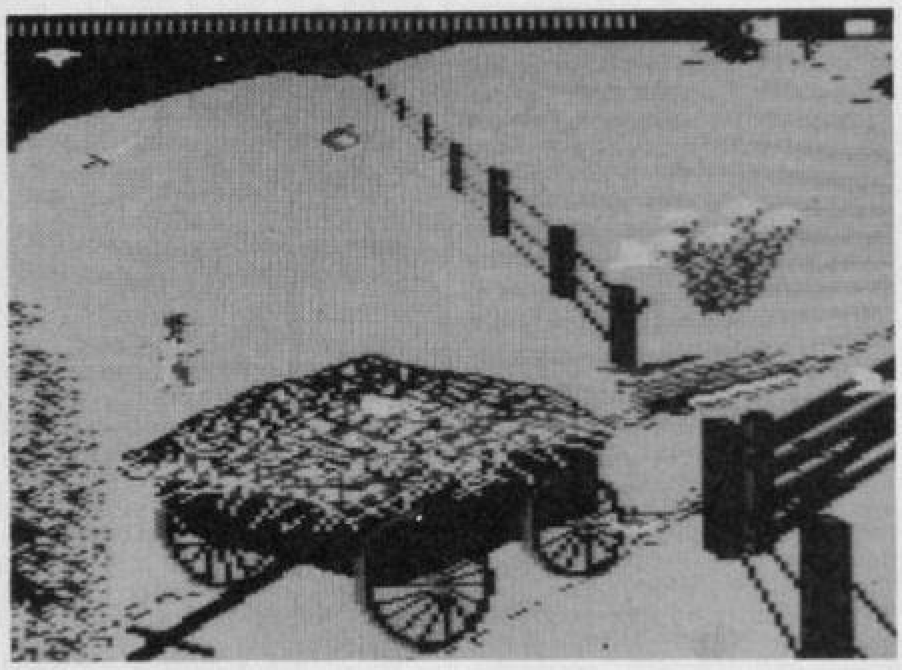
Playability 12%
A very lame game.

Addictive qualities 14%
Marginally more than none.

Value for money 11%
Even if it was the same price as a blank tape there should be a discount for the inconvenience of having to wipe the game off.

Overall 8%
No thanks.





ZANIA

Myrddin Software,
£14.95, disk only
Machine, 664 & 6128 only

Zania is a fully animated adventure depicting the trials and tribulations of Percy Veer in his quest for a chest of gold. Percy (ie you) has to explore his strange world in order to find a series of objects which will allow him to enter areas which are otherwise inaccessible. Percy can carry two objects at a time and these are displayed at the top of the screen.

Also displayed at the top of the screen are three 'thermometers' which contain different information. The first displays strength which is depleted when Percy is hit by low flying birds (of which there are several). The second shows the current level of anti-bird pills possessed by Percy. When these are taken, Percy is spared the wrath of the airborne adversaries for a few seconds. This supply is limited however and should be used wisely. Lastly there is a display showing the number of successfully completed sections of the game.

The rest of the screen is taken up with the main display, used to keep an eye on Percy. The view is drawn in the Amstrad's sixteen colour mode and uses forced perspective techniques so that when Percy walks away from the screen he becomes smaller and when he walks towards it the opposite happens. Percy can pick up objects just by standing next to them while the player presses the fire button. Objects are randomly situated and actually have no logical bearing on the game. Therefore determining which object opens up a new section of the game is really a matter of trial and error.

When the right object is taken to the correct location, Percy stops moving while the disk is accessed. The screen then scrolls in the required direction and the game continues. The landscape is very surreal with fields, a castle and some airborne contraption which defies simple explanation — it really has to be seen . . . Speaking of things in the air brings up the point of the birds again. These constitute the main difficulty Percy has to face as they not only proliferate, but they hit our hero with alarming regularity. The consequences of this travesty have already been diskussed.

The gold does not appear to be easy to find and as a helping hand from the powers that be, whenever Percy does something right, some of his energy supply is replenished. How big the world of *Zania* is cannot be easily determined as the game has defeated attempts to ex plore all the way through. However, a demo on the B side of the disk reveals an area approximately six screens large. Watch the birdie . . .

CRITICISM

1 Never mind watch the birdie, here we have a game that proves dodos aren't extinct. The attempt at forced perspective fails miserably as everything is ridiculously out of proportion. Percy looks most uncomfortable and I think I would feel the same if I had a body like that. The game has little in the way of internal consistency and with the only challenge coming from the pathetic birds, soon becomes boring. The castle looks pretty but everything else in the game is really a waste of time. Moving around static objects is difficult because of the poor way in which the perspective is handled and the objects that need to be carried can rarely be identified as anything other than a blob. Despite the wonderful cover art, this game is a mess.

2 When playing the game, you get the impression that with a little more care, it could have been a really exciting piece of software. The way characters can keep moving (although slowed down), while the disk is being accessed, is really very clever, but the aesthetics and logic of the game are really depressing. Some very surreal concepts are played around with but these won't make anybody happy when they see what has happened to them. At the end of the day, *Zania* fails as a good game. In fact it all looks rather silly. There's not enough excitement or coherency to make this worth buying.

3 Zania *is the first really large disk-based graphic adventure I've played on the Amstrad, and at first looks seems quite good with a small arcade element - but after a while I realised it was another long boring, badly created graphic adventure which could have turned out well if a bit more time had been spent on both graphic and adventure elements. As an adventure I found hard to get anywhere by logic but easier to just pick up something and see if it works. Lots of good ideas have been used but not developed to their full potential such as the scrolling which is too jerky scroll about four pixels a time and the idea of picking up objects to gain access to another part - some objects you find are very out of place, like telephones in a field and cups near the riverside. All the screens have a nice mix of colour but don't display enough at once, which is a pity because you don't get to see the affect of such large things as the castle - which is very well drawn. The flying sequence is ludicrous and just consists of an extension to the walking area - walking in mid air is not my idea of a good adventure. An above average game for a large slice of your weekly earnings.*

Presentation 65%
Nice cover. Very little else.

Graphics 43%
Chunky, badly proportioned and poor choice of colours for green screen owners.

Sound 19%
Mainly consists of deafening silence.

Playability 44%
Slow and unresponsive control leads to unrewarding play.

Addictive qualities 34%
Would have been better if you could nuke the birdies.

Value for money 28%
Relatively expensive way of buying a disk you are only going to reformat in the end.

Overall 32%
One or two interesting plot ideas but appallingly programmed.

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SKYFOX

Ariolasoft, £9.95. cass

Firstly, let's get something straight: This is not a flight simulation — it's a fight simulation. *Skyfox* puts you in the flying seat of the latest jet fighter plane defending a land of frightened colonists from the marauding forces of invading aliens. The colony, or combat arena, is represented as a grid of 25 by 25 squares (sectors) with tanks, enemy planes and motherships to contend with. All action takes place within this grid and should you leave it, a tone sounds and a warning message is given.

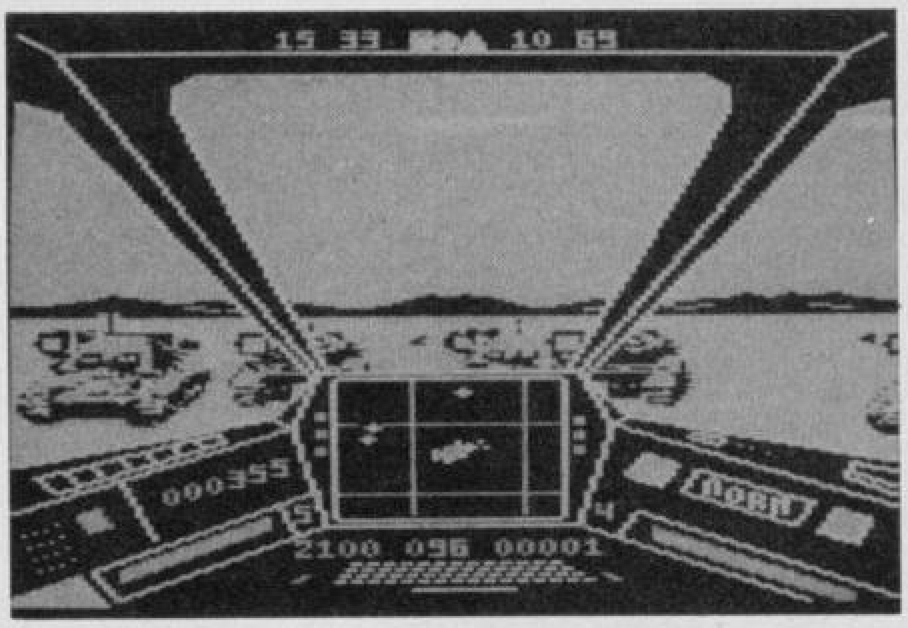
You are given three 'lives' and can choose one of five difficulty levels (from the easiest (Cadet) to the hardest (Ace of the Base) and any one of fifteen different scenarios (ranging from simple tank and enemy plane training to full scale invasions and specific enemy invasion patterns). Tank training pits you against nothing but tanks and plane training — just planes (plane training three puts you up against planes and tanks). High/low training throws tanks at you followed by planes, while combo training gives you both at once. A small invasion consists of one mothership (a sort of floating city) that must be destroyed before it launches enough planes and tanks to destroy your base. Full invasion has three motherships attacking and the massive onslaught has six! Finally there are five different attack strategies — Halo, Alamo, Advancing Wall, Chess and Cornered — each following specific patterns that must be studied and understood. For example, Halo puts you slap bang in the middle of a ring of advancing tanks and planes, and requires you to escape as near unscathed as possible.

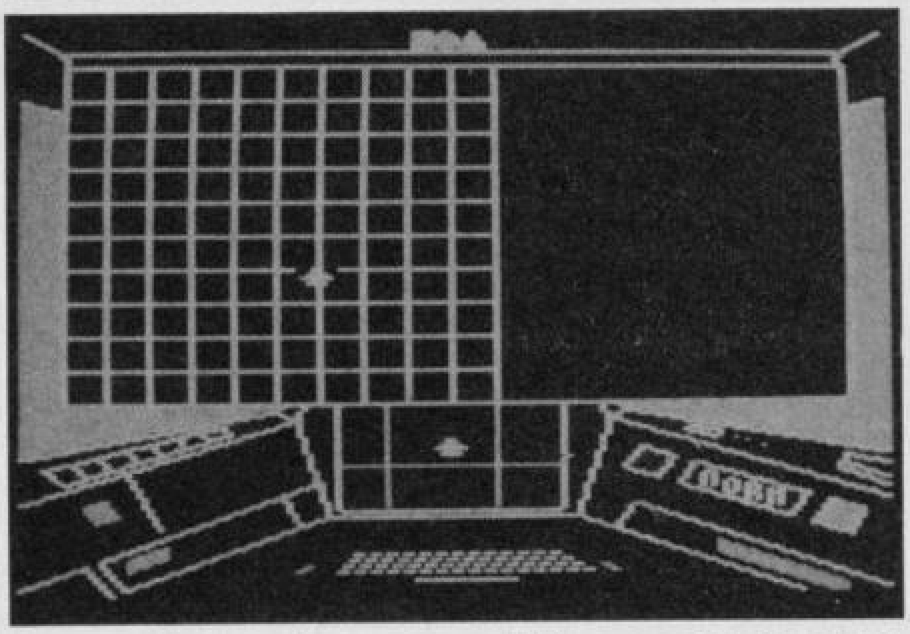
The Skyfox plane is fully equipped to cope with all situations that may arise (providing the pilot is up to it, of course), as it comes fully armed with laser cannon, heat seeking missiles and guided missiles. The laser cannon is activated by simply pressing the fire button and an unlimited number of shots are instantly at your disposal. Heat seeking and guided missiles on the other hand, are in short supply with only five of each being provided and they must be primed before firing. Shields surround the plane as limited protection but diminish with each direct hit against you (on higher levels, hitting the ground weakens the shield heavily). Shield strength, along with fuel, can thankfully be replenished by landing at home base.

The speed of the plane is controlled by the keyboard. Pressing numbers from nought to nine gives you respective percentage speeds (eg pressing 1 gives you ten percent of maximum speed) and slight adjustments of 100 mph can be made. Sudden bursts of speed are also possible by engaging the plane's afterburners but this proves expensive on fuel, so careful use of this function should be made. There are indicators either side of the control panel to show fuel and shield status along with numerous other things such as speed, altitude, current compass heading (in degrees), your current X/Y coordinates, a clock (to show elapsed time since launch), number of heat seekers, guided missiles and a radar scanner display.

At any time during the game you can call up your base computer to keep track of what's going on (providing your home base hasn't been destroyed)! This computer allows you to check on your score (plus a summary of how many colonists are living/dead, how many tanks, planes and motherships have been destroyed etc), check on shield status for each installation (and which, if any, are still functional) and plan your tactics on a tactical map (a simplified map of what is where). You can also zoom up on a particular sector to see exactly what is there.

To cut out needless and monotonous flying around in search of aliens to kill, there is an auto pilot function. When there are no enemy targets to be seen, activating the on-board computer controlled auto pilot speeds your craft to the vicinity of the nearest enemy. If all the enemy have been destroyed, you are taken back to home base instead.





CRITICISM

1 *Skyfox* **is one of the most colourful airplane shoot' em ups I've played on the Amstrad, but it lacks one important factor - SPEED. The 'Skyfox' plane is a very well equiped combat plane, and has a very neat cockpit with all you'll ever need to have in it. One nice touch of the equipment in your plane are the range of weapons, from good old bullets to heat seaking and guided missiles - which believe me come in very useful if you find yourself surrounded by enemy planes and tanks, a common occurence for me. I found the** *Skyfox* **plane very manoeuvrable, even if it was very slow reacting and moving, and got it to do lots of things from diving to landing which was very useful because, as the inlay says 'The Slow Don't Live'. One good feature of** *Skyfox* **is that you can advance from the mere tank training exercise to a 'massive onslaught'- (who wrote these inlay descriptions?) Every plane and tank is well detailed, usually requiring a very accurate hit to destroy it, which kept me at** *Skyfox* **for quite a while, (in fact the only thing that stopped me was the famous M.E.B. power cuts).**

2 I really enjoyed my first few games of *Skyfox* mainly because I always found myself with something to do all the time I was playing. *Skyfox* is a most enthralling game with lots of colour and complementing sound effects that add to the whole feel of flying a fast combat armoured superplane. I enjoyed my first few games of *Skyfox* but found it's lasting appeal very short indeed and this made the price a bit too high for an average game. The game idea is good on the surface but unfortuanatly it has not been explored enough - perhaps there should have been a few missions as on *Elite* or something of that nature. The speed of the game I found much too slow for any really fast combat scenes, and slow reacting when in a sticky situation. I suppose if you really like this type of game then it's great but I prefer something which has more than just nice presentation.

3 Skyfox *is an excellent game.It is not like* Fighter Pilot *but is much harder than most flight simulations. It has loads of options from which to choose and lots of buttons to fiddle around with to increase your chances of success. The graphics are great but scroll with a bit of a jerk but then nothing's perfect.One small complaint is the sound which is not as good as it could be. It's one of the best games of its type and is well worth buying. But be warned it's far from easy so CHOCKS AWAY.*

Presentation 81%
All in all very neat with some good options.

Graphics 88%
Colourful and effective but tend to be slow.

Sound 78%
Nothing very special.

Playability 88%
It's a lot of fun but the speed tends to make it drag a little.

Addictive qualities 84%
Could be more enduring than a flight simulator.

Value for money 79%
One pound over the norm.

Overall 83%
An attractive game which will appeal more to the strategists than the fly boys.

CONTRAPTION!
ICON

CONTRAPTION

Audiogenic, £7.95 cass

Contraption stars an ageing Mad Professor who has, for some totally unknown and mysterious reason, a machine that eats golden apples. The professor is somewhat proud of his creation and to stop it from diminishing and dying he decides that some golden apples must be found. You may think a staple diet of golden apples is a little bit impractical to say the least, well it's worse than that since the machine will only eat square ones. Luckily the professors back garden just happens to be packed with such fruit and even more luckily each section of his garden contains four apples, just enough for a byte size snack. Another problem with the professor's machine is that it isn't too efficient at converting its lunch into energy and there's only a limited amount of time before it'll need another lunch. Still the professor loves his machine so and it'll take a lot more than the spaggy plants, very nasty fish and deadly bees to deter him from collecting the golden fruit.

The trouble is it's not really the Professor's problem, it's yours. In *Contraption* you must control the deranged scientist through his fruit laden garden to feed the goldlust of his machine. The general format is the age old one of the platform game. The Professor can stroll left and right and also jump in those directions. His garden is quite a deadly place populated with many a beasty able to trounce the ageing academic. Only three lives are supplied which makes your task all the harder. Each section of the garden takes up the whole screen apart from a section down the right hand screen. Here is contained a slowly sinking timer showing how long till the machine cops it through lack of food. Throughout the garden are the four apples needed for the machine. These are usually placed in the most awkward places possible, calling for careful control of the Professor. Also somewhere on the screen is a closed door. Once the apples have been collected the door automatically opens.

Travelling through the door takes you into the machine's room, an evil looking beast that is all pistons and valves. A few jumps up to the top of the screen allows the Professor to drop the apples into the machine's funnel. Extra bonus is given for time left.

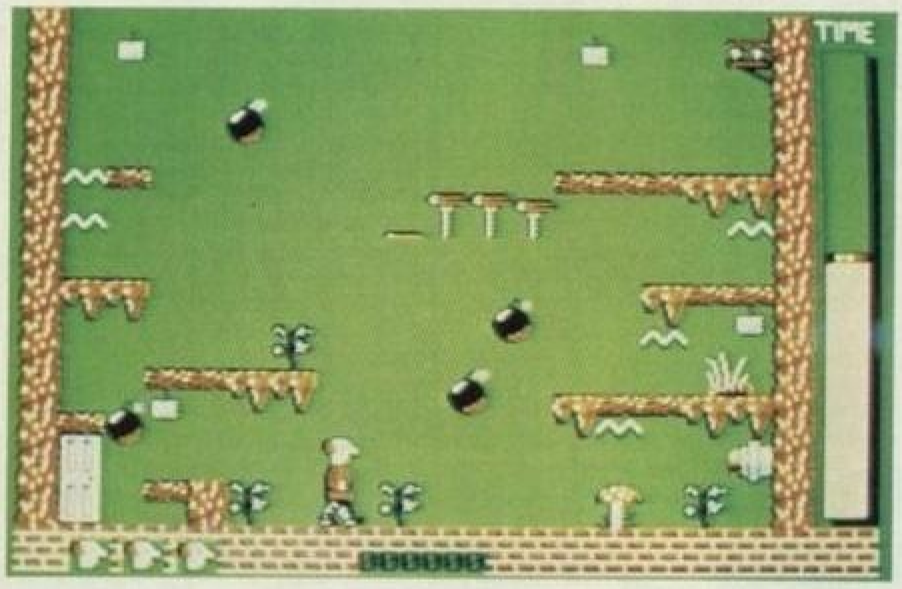
After that you are automatically transported back to the next section to get yet another four tortuously placed apples. **Control keys:** Z,X left,right and SHIFT for jump.

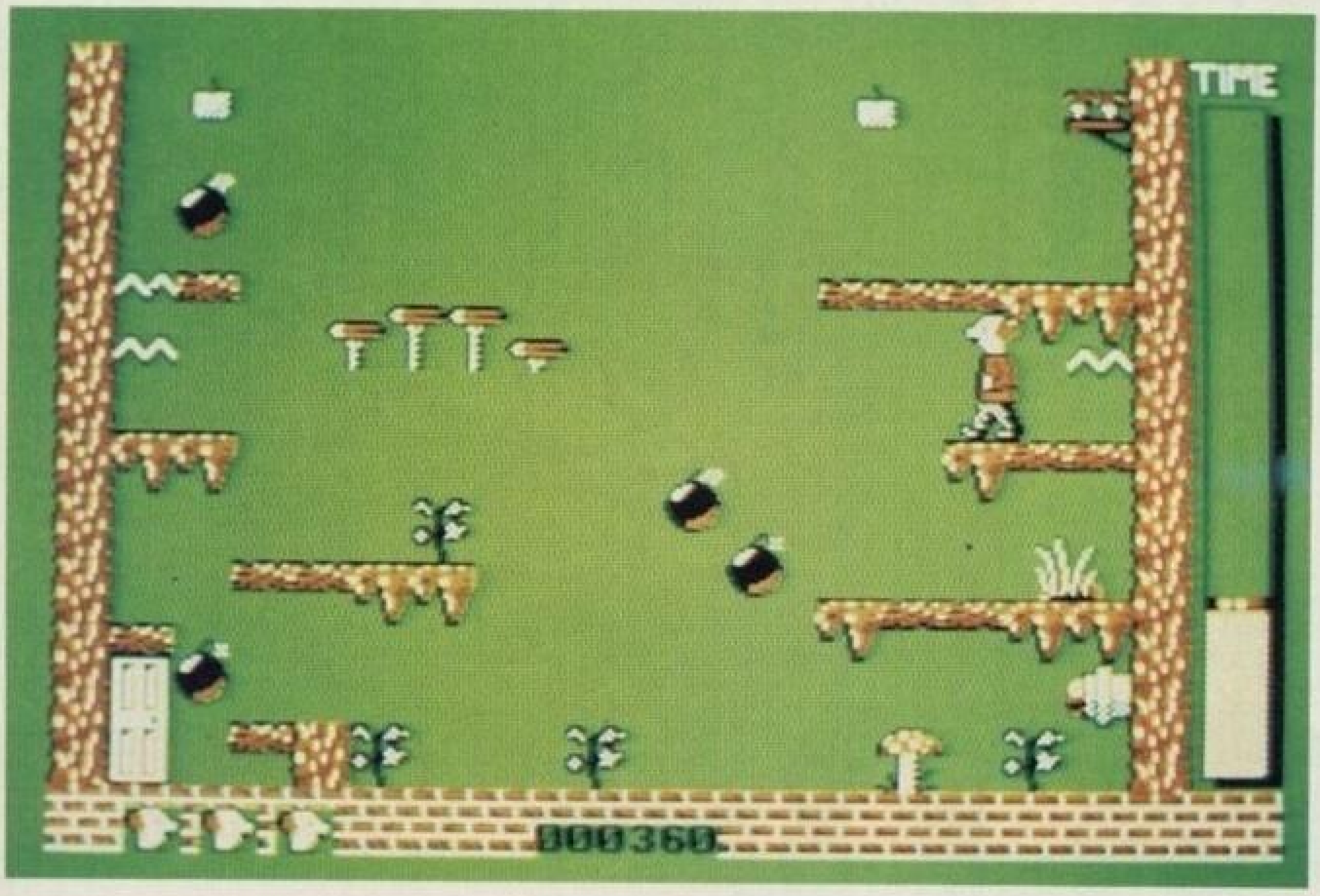
CRITICISM

1 *Contraption* **is a beautifully designed game with lots of smoothly animated colourful sequences to delight even the most boring shoot'em up freak. The game screens are littered with all kinds of little doobries, all of which might come in useful. The idea of the game is very** ***Manic Miner*****-ish but contains some very sly objects to over come— such as platforms which move sideways, up and down and sometimes disappear. I thought** ***Contraption*** **was much harder than** ***Manic Miner*** **and much more fun to play, despite only having a small amount of screens to get past. The game requires a lot of patience and time to complete due to it's difficulty and design. If you're the platform type and have felt a bit left out lately then feed your pangs of desire and get** ***Contraption*** **- Great fun at an average price.**

2 Though just a simple platform game at heart, *Contraption* has to be the most sophisticated game of its type. The graphics are truly outstanding, especially considering they are only four colour. The extra detail available in mode 2 is used to excellent effect. Even though some of the larger shapes flicker, the movement is very realistic indeed, the feel of gravity is very neat indeed. Completing even the first screen is a battle though I feel it's a challenge many platformists may well enjoy!

3 *This wacky platform and ladders game is really great fun. The graphics are really amazing and look brilliant in colour. The game itself is just a sort of* Manic Miner *clone but is brilliant fun to play. The time limit make things hard but the challenge just gets the adrenalin flowing and makes it all the more enjoyable.* Contraption *is a truly brilliant game that I can recommend to anyone.*





Presentation 89%
Lovely title screen with attractive attract screen though it takes a few too may keypresses.

Graphics 91%
Beautiful and extremely imaginative use of colour and detail make Contraption about the prettiest game of its type.

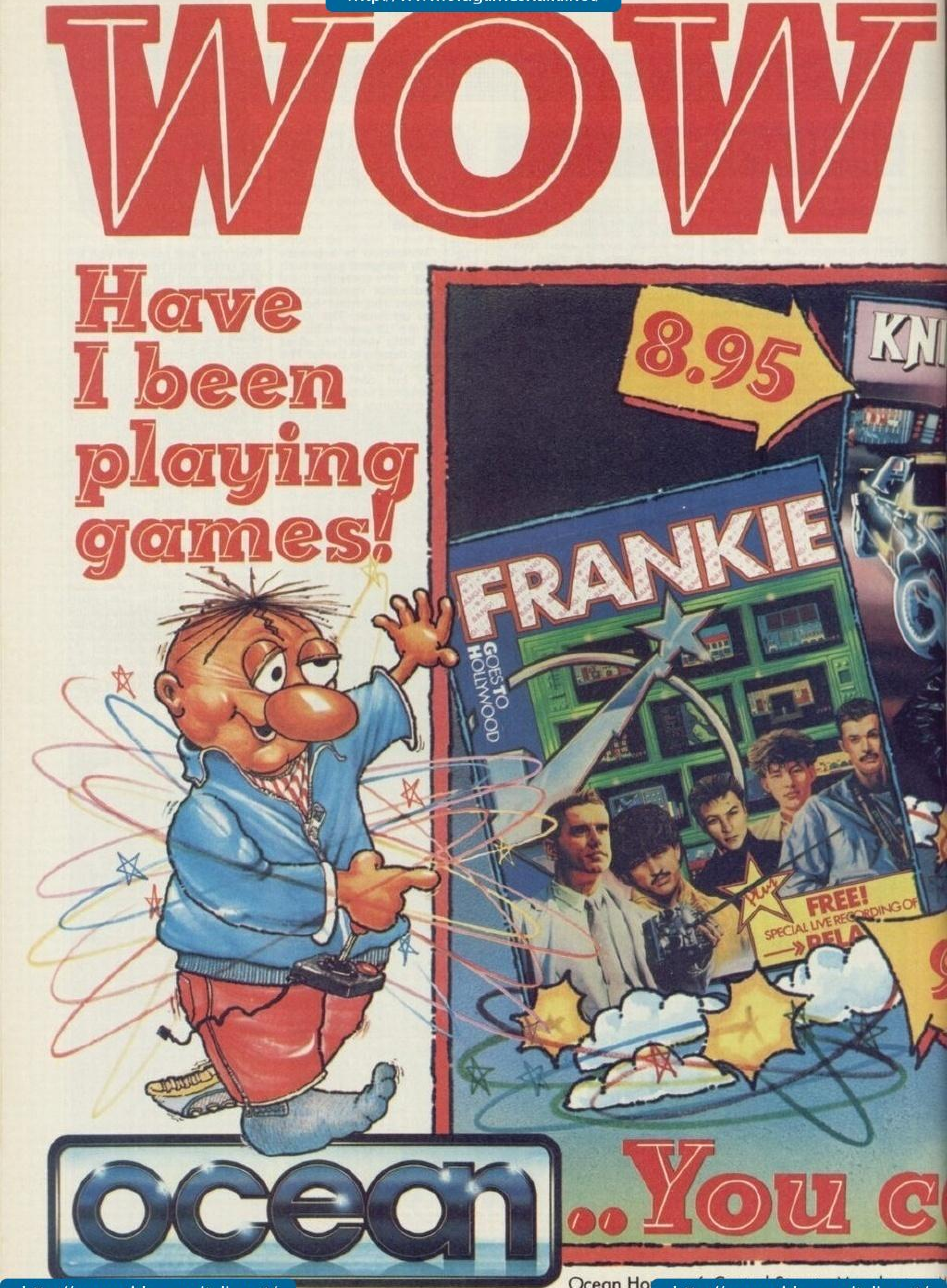
Sound 72%
Pleasant sound effects though nothing outstanding.

Playability 86%
All the usual instant appeal that most platform games carry.

Addictive qualities 81%
The biggest attraction is the 'what's on the next screen?' curiosity and quite an attraction it is too . . .

Value for money 88%
A little below the norm but the game stands out from the crowd.

Overall 85%
A great game that will certainly appeal to platform freaks but should also give quite a bit of joy to any amster gamester.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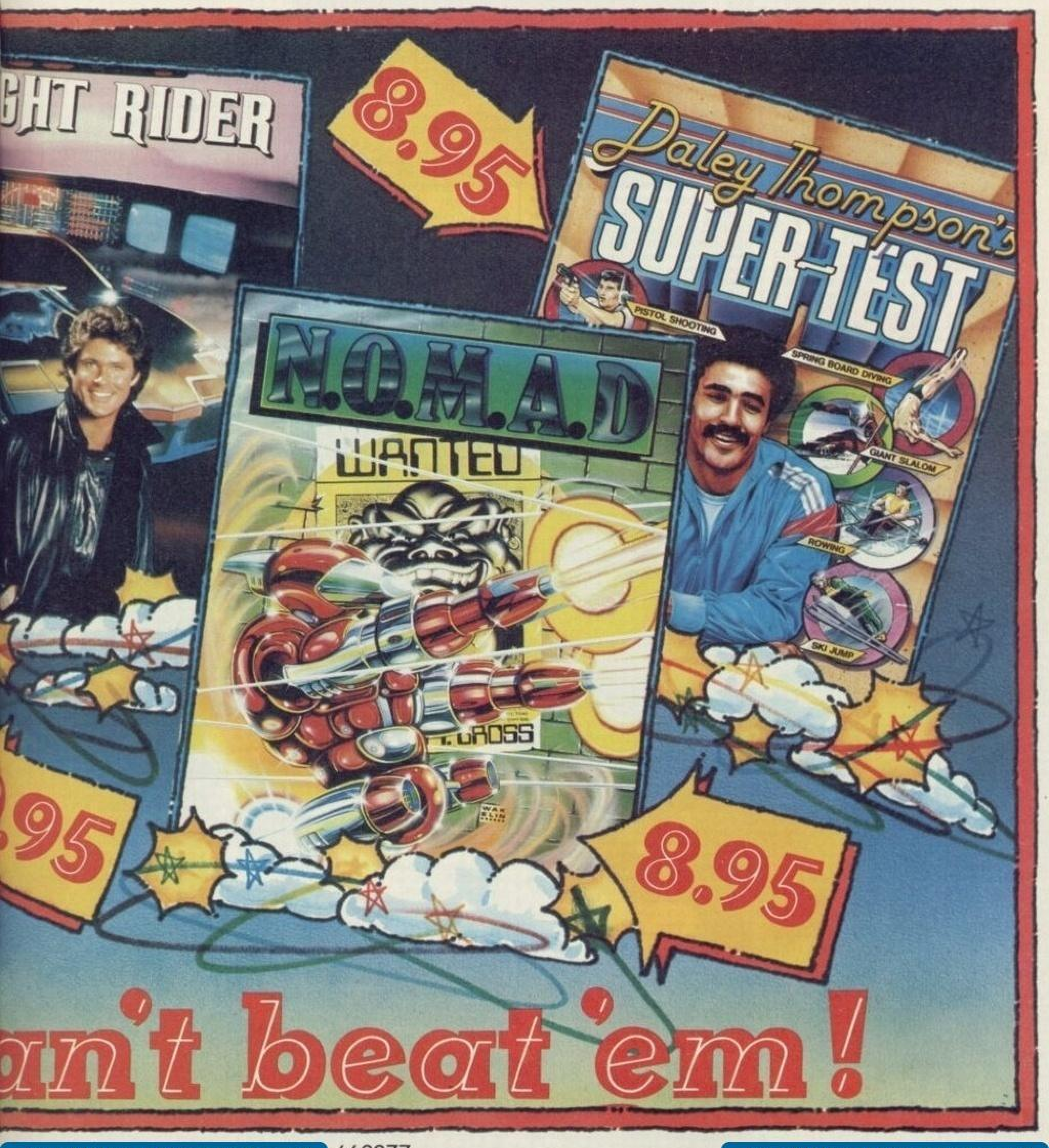
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SPELLBOUND

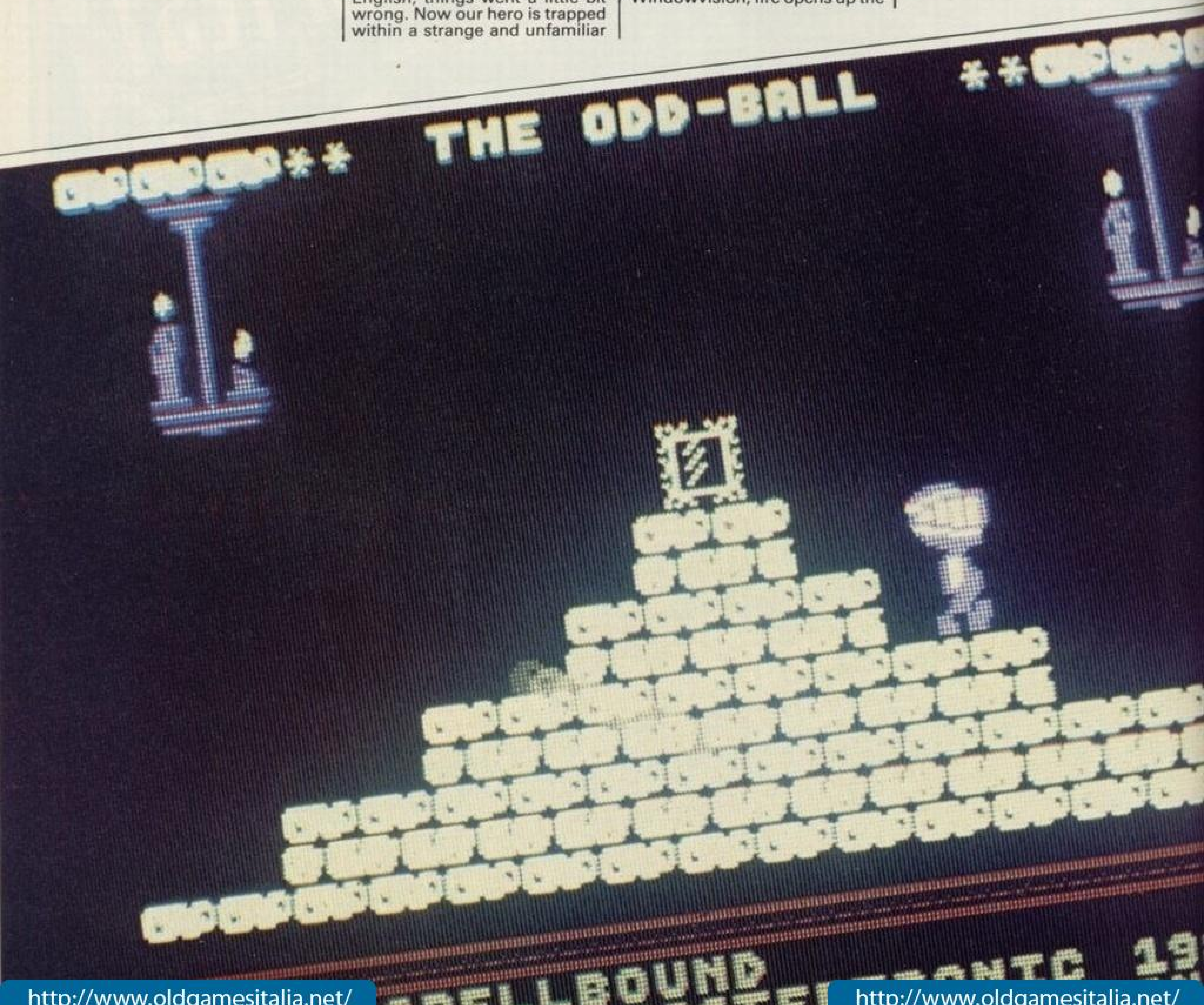
Mastertronic, £2.99 cass
Author: David Jones
(conversion by Ed Hickman)

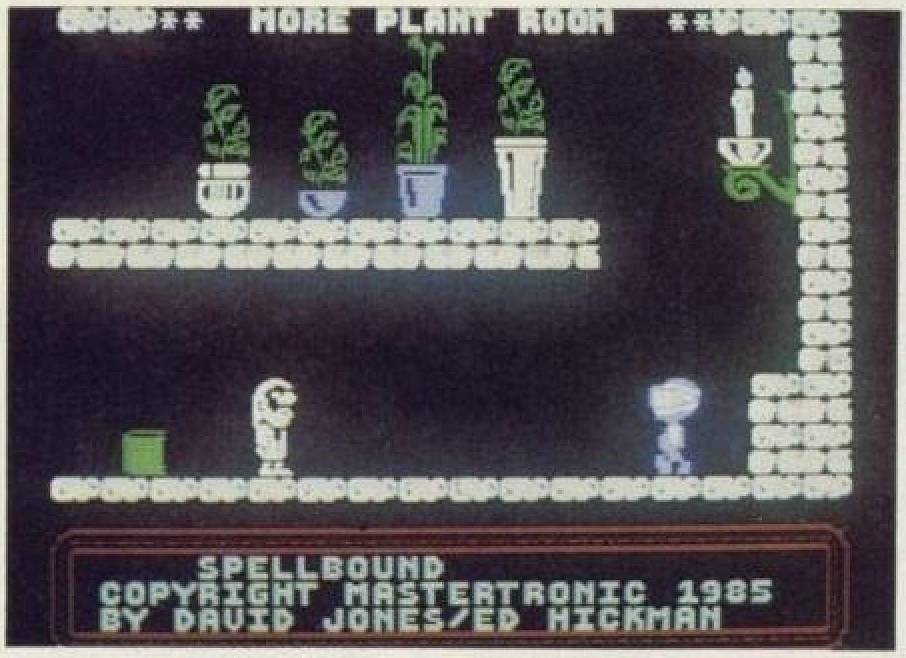
As a continuation of his adventures in *Finders Keepers*, Magic Knight now reappears in a new Mastertronic release, *Spellbound*. Part of the new Mad Games range, *Spellbound* is a true graphic adventure.

Magic Knight's mentor and teacher, Gimbal the Wizard, has accidentally managed to bind you and seven other characters within a summon spell. The spell was intended to be an aid to Gimbal's quest for better tasting rice pudding. Due to a slight typographical error which occurred when the incantations were translated from ancient English to slightly less ancient English, things went a little bit wrong. Now our hero is trapped within a strange and unfamiliar land with a bunch of people from different slices of history. Being the brave good guy among the collection of oddities it's down to Magic Knight to return the various people to their respective time/space zones. First on your list of major things to do is to release Gimbal from a self inflicted white out spell but, as in any good adventure, there's a number of smaller tasks to perform first.

Though *Spellbound* looks very similar to any run of the mill left/right and jump game, pressing fire soon shatters that illusion. Based around a windowing system by the name of Windowvision, fire opens up the primary menu replete with a list of options available to Magic Knight. A pointer controlled by the up and down keys highlights various options as you move it about, and fire takes you to the sub menu for that option.

When you change to a sub window it opens up over the main one and a pointer appears on the sub directory. Using this system, the amount of options available to you easy equals those within many text adventures. As you progress through the game the options and actions open to you change, allowing Magic Knight to take advan-





SPELLBOUND
COPYRIGHT MASTERTRONIC 1985
BY DAVID JONES/ED HICKMAN

tage of any new objects or powers he may have acquired. Extra options are highlighted in white.

Apart from using the menu system, you can move Magic Knight around the screens with left, right and jump. Obviously Magic Knight has developed some pretty impressive leg muscles since his last game: jump causes him to take a real mega leap skywards.

Any object or character you may come across can be examined via the main menu. While a character is being examined, a small screen with a graphic of the character under scrutiny appears. Such details as strength, happiness, stamina, spell power and food level are detailed. You can even examine yourself; very handy, since being a brave knight expends strength quite a bit and if it reaches zero the games is over. When it comes to examining an object, a graphic of the object under scrutiny is displayed together with details on the four different attributes possessed by objects: weight, magic power, read and drop status: The read and drop information tell whether you can drop the object you've acquired or use the read function on it to glean information. The weight reading can be critical as well. The more the knight carries, the quicker his strength is sapped. If Magic Knight is too weak then he won't be able to pick up heavy objects.

There's a large strategic element to the game. The other captives of the summon spell wander about in a bit of a daze and need looking after. You need to command characters to do things for their own good, and you have to get hold of the wand of command before the option, which allows you to tell people what to do, appears on your menu. Since the characters don't have the sense to fend for themselves, it's up to you to tell them to go away, eat, drink, and be happy.

If your fellow captives aren't kept in good health they may well die. The characters also have to be kept happy or it's likely they will get in a bit of a sulk and be loathe to obey any commands that may be issued to them. Other people may well be in possession of objects you need but, understandably, they like to keep hold of anything they've got. Command a character to go to sleep and anything they have can be easily pilfered. When a character is asleep it's also possible to give them something they wouldn't normally accept.

The domain in which the spell of summoning has trapped the cast of characters is split into seven floors, each spanning around seven or eight screens. To travel between floors the Knight has to use the lift found at the extreme left hand side of each floor.

Some objects can be found which can't actually be used — they do offer clues, however, and the clue they contain can usually be liberated with the read function. A few totally useless, though amusing, objects litter the place as well. Upon starting, Magic Knight's only possession is an advert: read this and you're informed that David Jones created *Spellbound* and suggests going out and buying *Finders Keepers*.

Another addition to the Knight's worries is there's only 48 hours to complete his task. Oh dear. Better get going . . .

Control keys: A/Z up,down N/M left,right and Space for fire.

CRITICISM

1

Spellbound is a type of follow up to *Finders Keepers* **but I think it is quite a lot better. It uses a 'window menu system' which means when you want to do something you press the Fire button and obtain a list of commands. Its graphics aren't as good as** *Finders Keepers* **but close.The game is fun to play and does not need much explaining to get started. It is worth buying, is not too difficult to play,and is yet another good game from Mastertronics. Keep up the good work.**

2

An excellent game from Mastertronics who are renowned for their excellent value budget software.This one is a bit more upmarket but is still a good buy. At £2.99 it was easy on the pocket as you can pay up to ten pounds for a piece of software of the same standard. The game's musical content was good but it gets frustrating as time goes on. The graphics are excellent with a unique menu/viewing system which allows you to do almost anything. It makes you want to sit there for hours trying to figure it out and is a worthy edition to anyone's collection

3

Even though Spellbound is just a budget release, the style and presentation of this grphic adventure is truly innovative. Despite totaly joystick based this release has it's roots firmly based in adventure. The windowing system is very easy to use indeed, cleverly hinting you in the right direction by dynamically altering th windows contents. Graphically things are a little colourless, the use of mode one not being the imaginative I have ever seen. Even so, Spellbound is a truly outstanding game and should appeal to both arcaders and adventure players alike.

Presentation 98%
Very clever, help available throughout the game.

Graphics 88%
Bit bland but very nice overall effect.

Sound 84%
Really grating tune but the sound effects compensate.

Playability 92%
Yes, lots and lots and lots (shut up Julian —Ed).

Addictive qualities 87%
Much more addictive than writing these one liners.

Value for money 98%
What can one say.

Overall 93%
You will be glued to this game not stuck with it.

PING PONG

Imagine, £8.95 cass
Author: Adrian Stevens

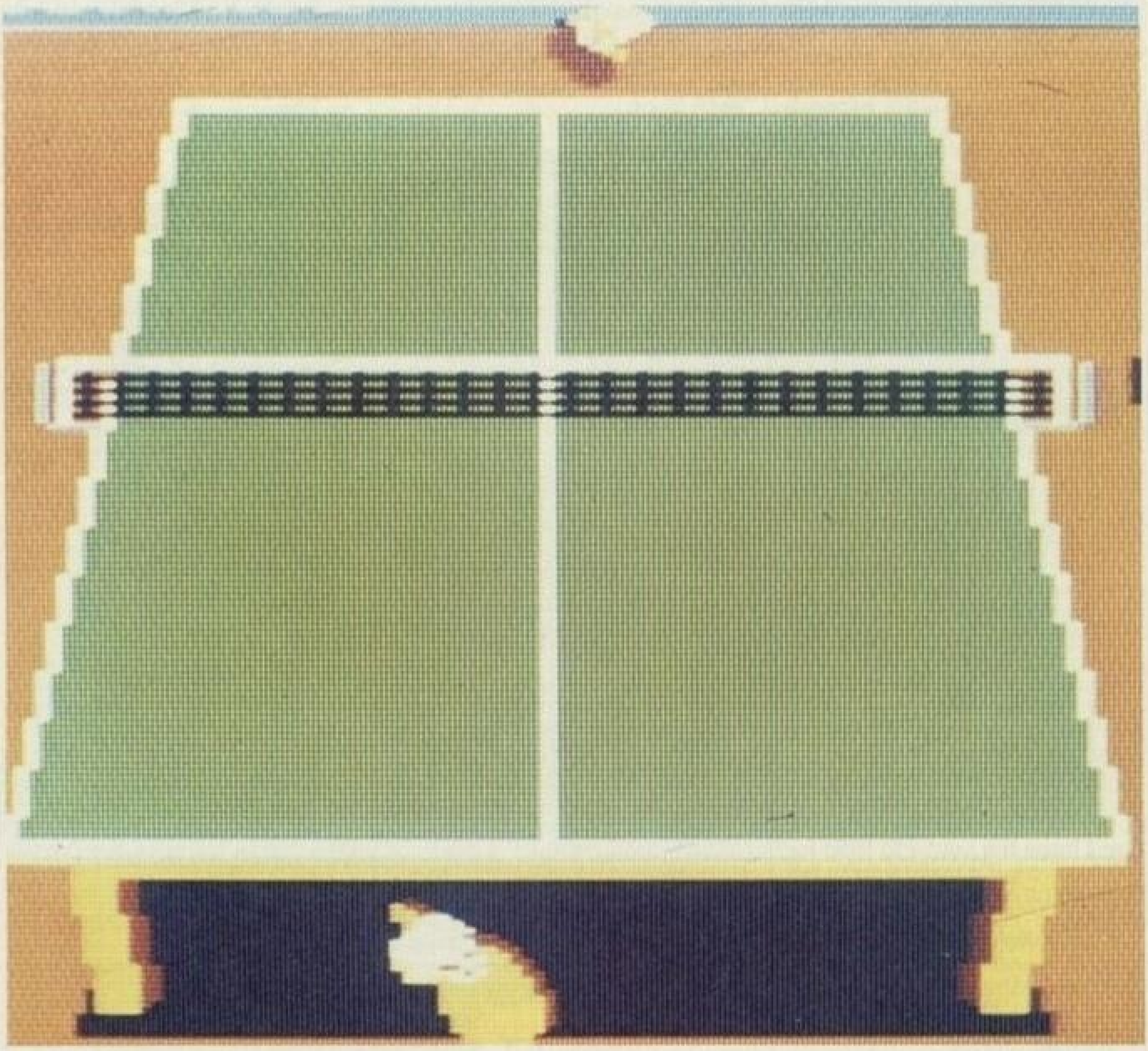
There have been all sorts of sports simulations written for the Amstrad, but nobody has been brave enough to tackle the fine art of table tennis. Well, not until now that is. *Ping Pong* a single player emulation of the fast and furious indoor bat game and is played abiding to the rules of the real thing. To win the game you have to outscore the computer opponent by being the first to score eleven points.

When you start the game you first have to select the level of the computer opponent from the five provided. Level one is by far the easiest and is played at a relatively slow and leisurely pace. Level five, on the other hand, is played at the same speed as the orientals play and the computer returns almost unstoppable shots with even more unstoppable shots.

The game is viewed from above and behind the base line of the table with your bat roughly positioned about a quarter of the way up the screen (have a look at the screen shot if you're confused). It's always played from this viewpoint, and there are no change of ends during the game. Both you and the computer's score along with other information (whether the ball is in or out etc) is shown either side of the table.

Crowds flank both sides of the screen — the right hand people cheer the computer whilst the crowd on the left hand side are ardent supporters of the human player. A nice feature is a little monkey which sits amongst the human player supporters. If you lose a game he cries, but if you win he jumps up and down, claps and generally disports himself in a very happy fashion.

Rather than have big, fatty figures obscuring the view Imagine have developed a novel approach to the game — only the bat and the hand that holds it are seen, allowing more of the table to be viewed.



Controlling the bat and hitting the ball isn't very difficult, and only takes a little practice. The most important aspect, though, is timing a shot correctly and doing that successfully is the key to the game.

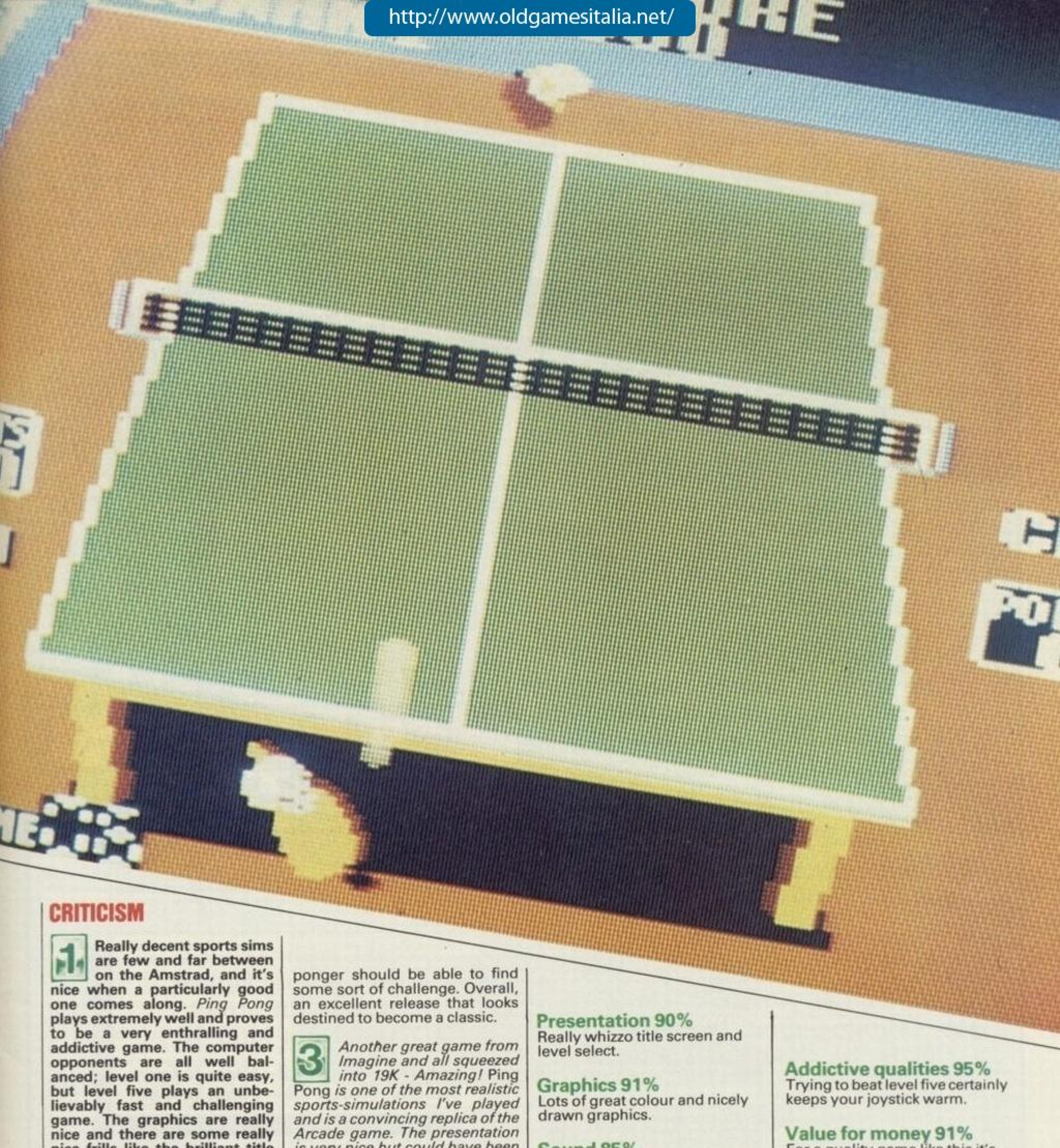
The computer automatically tracks the ball as it is hit over the net towards you and makes sure the bat is always behind it. All you do is select the type of shot you'd like to return which is done by moving the joystick in a certain direction as the ball reaches the bat. For example: moving the joystick right will give a slow return, and depending on how early or late the ball is hit will result in it veering to the left or right of the table. If the joystick is moved to the left then a fast drive will occur, whilst forward gives a smash (although this option should only be used if the ball has been lobbed, otherwise it'll wind up in the net).

The bat is held right handedly, which poses a problem if the opponent puts a shot to the right of the court. If this happens then keeping the fire button pressed down will put the bat in backhand mode allowing shots to be returned without missing the table.

At the start of any game the human player has to serve first. Again, timing is the key to success and perseverance reaps its own rewards. To throw the ball up in the air the joystick has to be pushed forward, and then a shot can be played in the conventional left/right way. When five points have been scored and every five points after that, the serving changes over. There's a time limit to each service (seven seconds) and if the ball isn't served in that time then a point is awarded to the opponent.

If the game is tied at ten points all then a tie break situation comes into effect. The first player to get two points in front of the opponent wins.

The game has an arcade scoring facility as well as table tennis scoring — every time a player hits the ball ten points are awarded allowing you to build up big scores. If you manage to beat a level then you automatically start another game, only against the next level of opposition.



CRITICISM

1 **Really decent sports sims are few and far between on the Amstrad, and it's nice when a particularly good one comes along.** ***Ping Pong*** **plays extremely well and proves to be a very enthralling and addictive game. The computer opponents are all well balanced; level one is quite easy, but level five plays an unbelievably fast and challenging game. The graphics are really nice and there are some really nice frills like the brilliant title screen. Beetle out to the shops and buy it now.**

2 As sport simulations go, *Ping Pong* has one of the most refreshing appro aches yet. Beautifully designed and outstandingly presented this has to be Imagine's best yet for the machine. Though the disembodied hands seem a mite bit strange at first, you soon get used to it. It's a great idea anyway, the playing area is hardly obscured at all by the whole body of the two players. A match against the computer is no easy thing either, the different levels are cleverly graded and even the most skilled ping ponger should be able to find some sort of challenge. Overall, an excellent release that looks destined to become a classic.

3 *Another great game from Imagine and all squeezed into 19K - Amazing!* Ping Pong *is one of the most realistic sports-simulations I've played and is a convincing replica of the Arcade game. The presentation is very nice but could have been improved with more options - but it is supposed to be an arcade copy. The whole feel of the game is very realistic and gives a good feel of the good ole' days of playing table-tennis in the garage - But of course without the balls all over the floor. One very good part of the game is the level options which do cope for a whole range from the bad be ginner to the Desmond (He's a famous TT player) Douglas type pro. The game is a bit shortened with playing up to only 11 points and only one chance to get you're serve right. Overall this is an excellent game, but with a few things missing; two-player, practice.*

Presentation 90%
Really whizzo title screen and level select.

Graphics 91%
Lots of great colour and nicely drawn graphics.

Sound 85%
Jolly jingles and super sound of the crowd.

Playability 95%
Yes, lots and lots and lots.

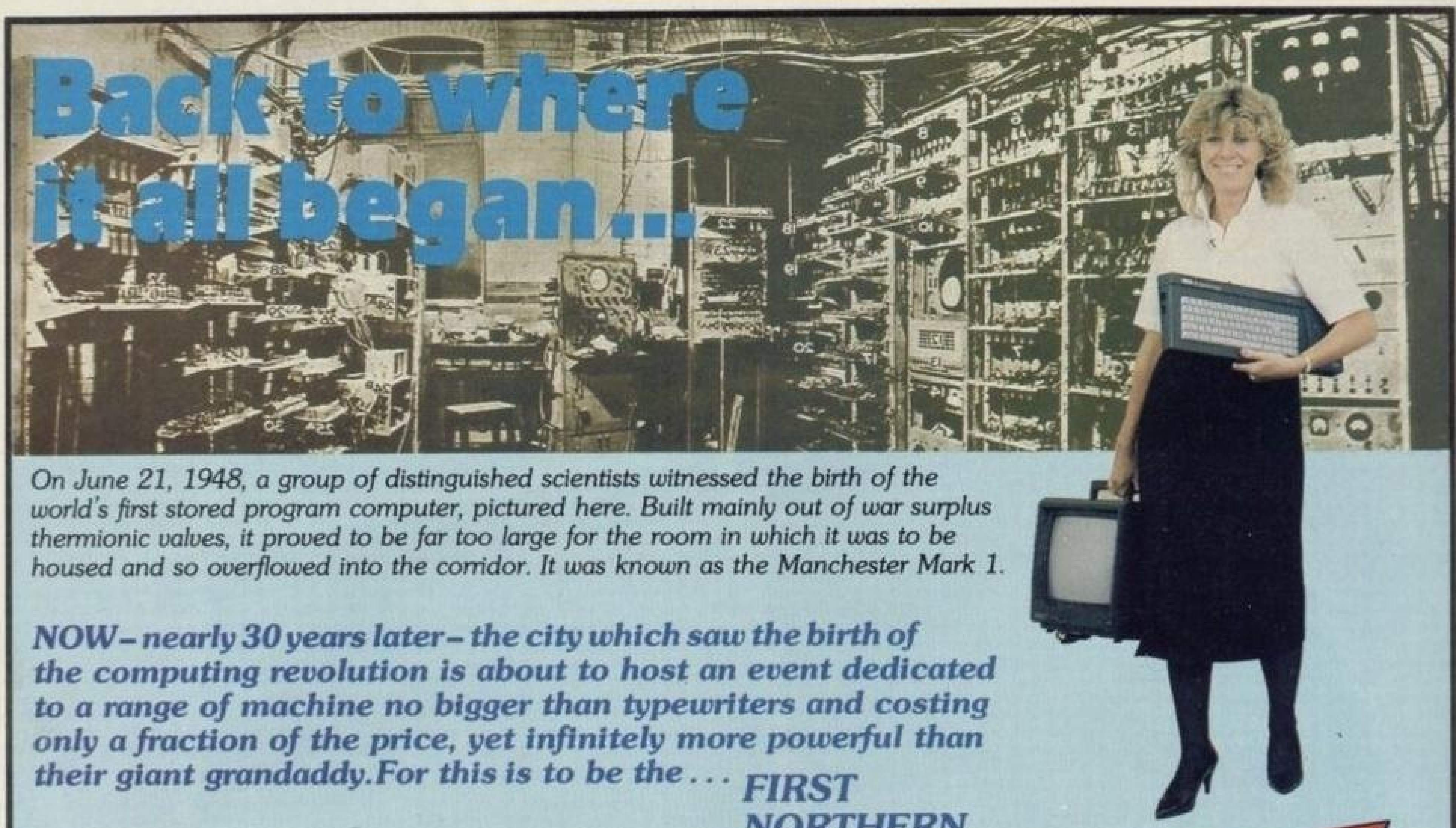
Addictive qualities 95%
Trying to beat level five certainly keeps your joystick warm.

Value for money 91%
For a quality game like this it's well worth the money.

Overall 94%
An excellent game which will have you pinging and ponging for a long time.

AN AMTIX! ACCOLADE

Back to where it all began...



On June 21, 1948, a group of distinguished scientists witnessed the birth of the world's first stored program computer, pictured here. Built mainly out of war surplus thermionic valves, it proved to be far too large for the room in which it was to be housed and so overflowed into the corridor. It was known as the Manchester Mark 1.

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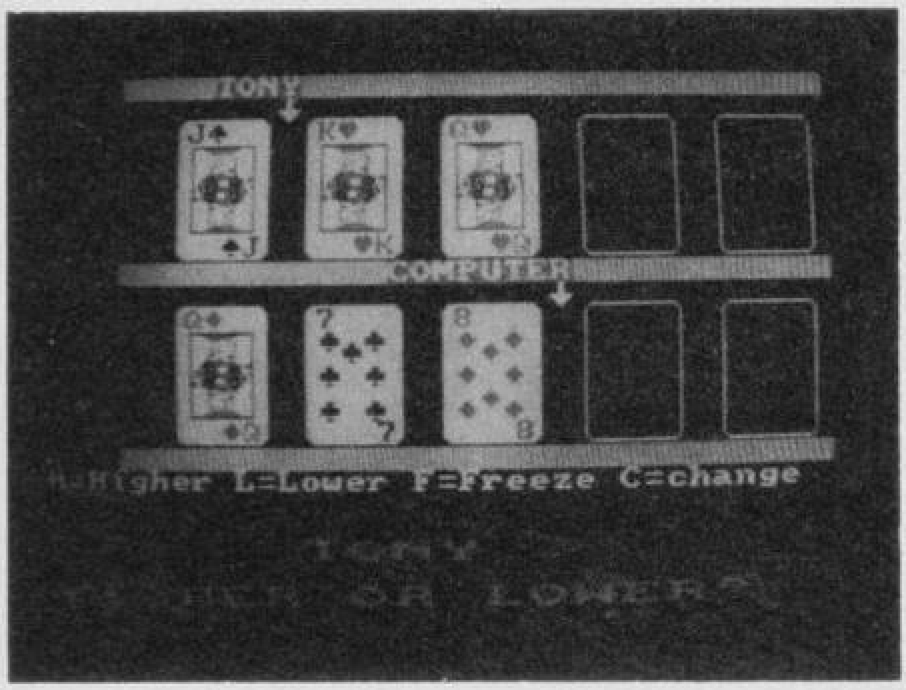
PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT

Britannia software, £7.95 cass

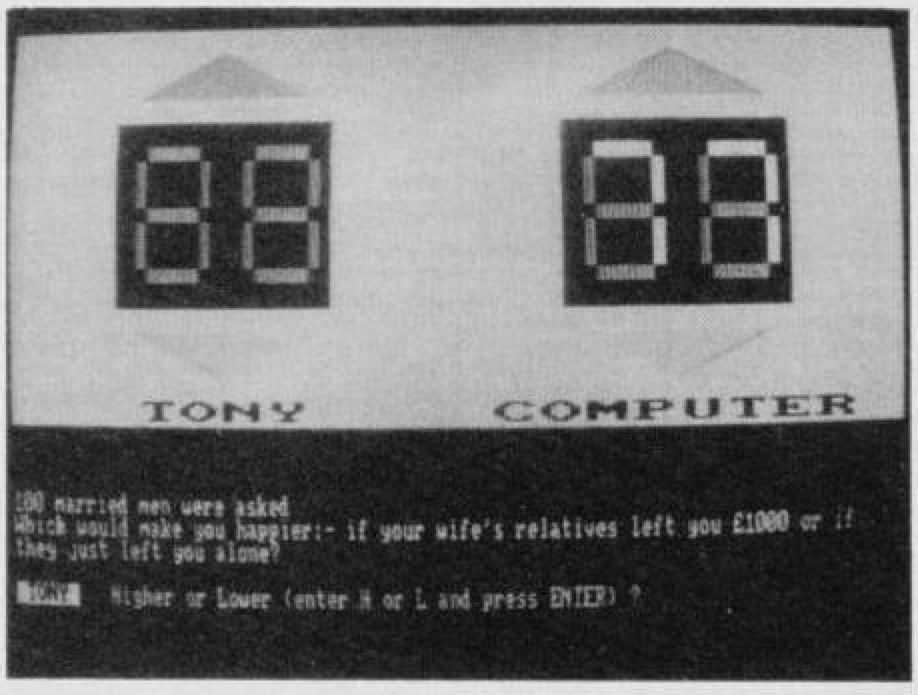
TV doesn't only serve as inspiration for odd arcade game, like *Street Hawk* (ho hum!). This new quiz game is based on that noisy and addictive Bruce Forsyth game produced by London Weekend Television.



There can't be many of you who haven't seen at least a little bit of this long running quiz game. You know the one. The studio audience (and perhaps the family if they are the excitable type), rise out of their seats shouting 'Higher' or 'Lower' as a pretty lady turns over a series of giant playing cards. Of course the difference with the computer version is that it lacks both the audience and Mr. Forsyth — but it's unlikely that any Amsters will suffer from withdrawal symptoms.

Once the game has loaded and the picture of Bruce has vanished you will be asked how you want to play the game. You can opt to play against the computer, or against another human, in which case you must type in both your own and your opponent's name. After that it's straight into the game. This starts with something along the lines of '100 men were asked if they thought they should open a car door for a lady'. Depending on who's turn it is to play, one of the competitors must guess the percentage of men responding with 'yes'. The other competitor then has to say whether he thinks the actual figure is higher or lower than that guessed. Whoever wins that section goes on to have first crack at the second section.

Two rows of cards are shown, one for each player. The first card in each row is shown face up, its value revealed to the world at large. The first player simply has to enter a series of guesses depending on whether he considers the next card in the row will be higher or lower than the previous card — excitable screaming is optional. Now, if it should be your turn and you guess incorrectly then your opponent has a go. The player who manages to guess correctly along his row of cards wins that round. A player must win two rounds out of three to pass on to the final section for the big gamble.



```
100 married men were asked
Which would make you happier:- if your wife's relatives left you £1000 or if
they just left you alone?

TONY   Higher or Lower (enter H or L and press ENTER) ?
```

This is the section where Bruce usually gets very excited, after all there is so much money at stake — well there would be in the television game, but this time you are only playing for points. You begin this section with 200 of the things and you are led over to one corner of the studio to face a sort of pyramid. On the bottom row there are 4 cards — the first one face up — the second row has another 3 cards, the third has two cards leaving one card at the very top. This round is played in a similar way to the last round, except there are more cards. Before you scream out 'higher' or 'lower' you must decide how much you would like to gamble. If you are wrong you lose your stake. If you are right your stake is doubled. You continue in this way until you have turned over all of the cards, the size of the prize being equal to the number of points you have accumulated.

BRITANNIA SOFTWARE LTD.
LWT
PLAY
YOUR CARDS
RIGHT

CRITICISM

1 **Play Your Cards Right is the sort of TV show that many enjoy watching but would prefer not to advertise the fact. I can't help feeling the computer version may enjoy the same fate. There's no mistake the game can be quite a lot of fun, even though we are not dealing with super prizes and big, beaming Bruce smiles. It all hangs on the turn of a card — even if the what is a few electronic points this can still provide quite a buzz. So, while this isn't the greatest of games on the Amstrad it remains sufficiently close to the original to be captivating to the right sort of mind. I would imagine that most would consider Mr Forsyth's absence as a plus.**

2 Quiz games seem to be quite popular on computers these days, com puterised version of well known television games have the advantage in that they are well known and well understood. But the major element of any quiz game should be that tests an individuals knowledge. In this respect *Play Your Cards Right* fails because the questions are so silly — they don't require intelligent answers — only guesses. I mean, do you really know how many women think that they should leave their husbands if they are awarded a black eye from him? The most annoying thing is that even after both players have had a guess, the exact percentage is not revealed. All in all this is a pretty boring game.

3 *Here we go, another television quiz copy. I am having a lot of difficulty making my mind up about this game. For starters the idea of guessing whether the next card will be higher or lower is quite fun — the high/low machines are quite popular in the arcades — but at least they pay out money if you win. Now I understand that it would have been a little bit difficult to have arranged a payout from your Amstrad but even so the game could have been made a lot more interesting. Once you have played a round and collected a few hundred points there isn't anything else to do but go back and so it again. The graphics are simplistic and the questions are presented in 80 column mode which can be uncomfortable for those with colour monitors.*

Presentation 39%
Apart from the terrible picture of Bruce on the loading screen there's nothing noteworthy.

Graphics 48%
Very ordinary with nothing imaginative added.

Sound 30%
I suppose credit should be given for not making us sit through repetitive and bland jingles like the television version does.

Playability 42%
Very much a matter of taste.

Addictive qualities 40%
Needs a lot more depth, you quickly get the feeling that you have done it all before.

Value For Money 33%
Would be well worth it if the game paid out.

Overall 49%
L-O-W-E-R.

ariolasoft

THINK

Ariolasoft, £8.95 cass

Converting board games to run on computers was quite popular not so long back, with old favourites like *Monopoly*, *Scrabble* and *Cluedo* springing instantly to mind. Ariolasoft's *Think* is a computerised board game which borrows many ideas from the *Connect Four* format. Mind you, *Think* doesn't strictly adhere to the *Connect Four* format and the computer is used to provide extra features which couldn't be included in a board version.

Upon loading one is presented with an icon driven menu, and using this menu you can select the various options laid open to a player. Using the keyboard or joystick you can move an arrow up or down until it aligns with an icon, press the fire and a multitude of options are shown.

There are six main option icons which include:- one or two player games, a tutorial or problem mode, different speeds and playing styles and colour of counters.

The game is played on a square playing board which is divided into a six by six grid. You can either challenge a friend, or if you have none then the computer will provide a tireless and intelligent opponent — itself. If you do find even at the lowest of the seven levels of difficulty it (the computer) is still hammering you then the tutor option can be selected and the computer will give you a little coaching.

If you know nothing about *Connect Four* then you won't know the object of the game, which is to complete a consecutive line of four of your counters either horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Each player has to shunt their counters onto the board from either the left and/or bottom of the screen, displacing and moving all the counters one square along. The trick of the game is to be able to foresee the consequences of each move and plan ahead, rather like chess.

During play you can access the icons to the right of the playing board. To do this you hold the joystick down (or the equivalent key) until a prompt sounds and the top left icon is highlighted. You can now use the game icons which include quit, show last move, force computer to move, get last move, computer suggested move and the back icon which will take the game back over the last two moves. At the end of a game you can review the whole sequence by accessing the *back* icon.

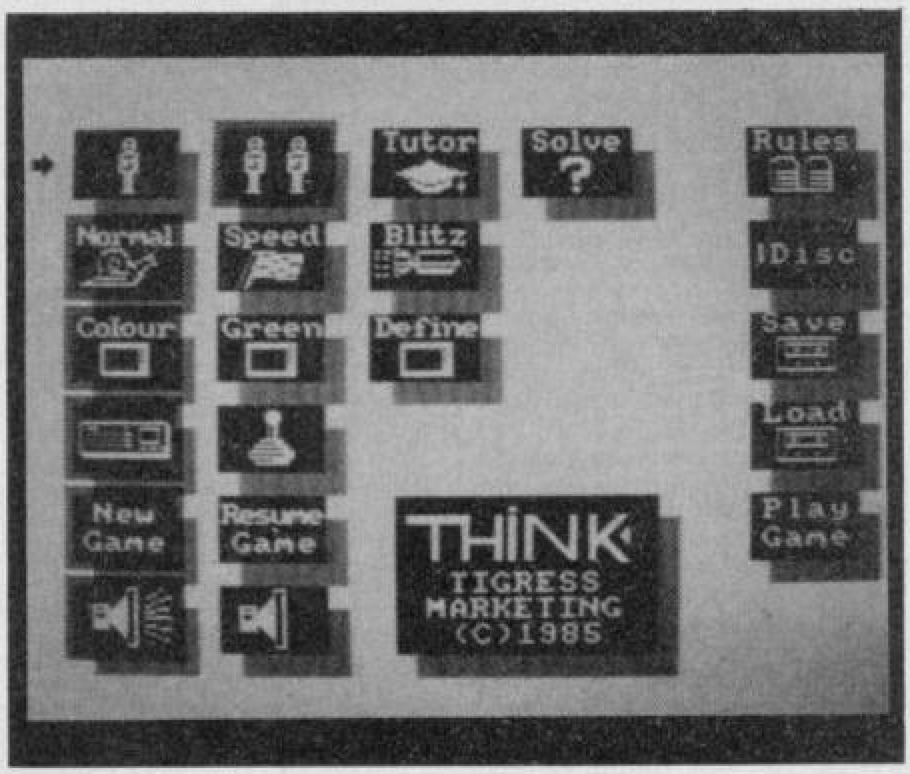
Once you've played a game you may want to use the other icon options to the right of the main menu. These are accessed in the normal way and allow you to look at the rules and watch a demo game, load or save from tape or disk, or you can return to the game proper.

The game has a multitude of options, and allows you to play different variations of the game. *Speed Think* is one of them, and is played with a small time limit for each move. If the time limit runs out then the opponent gets to make their move.

In *Blitz Think* you set a time limit in which you must finish the game. If you run over the time set, your opponent wins.

In *Tutor Mode* the computer allows you three attempts to make the best move and points are scored depending upon how soon you get it right. Three points for the first, two for the second and one for the third. After this the computer moves for you. At the end of the game the computer gives a percentage score.

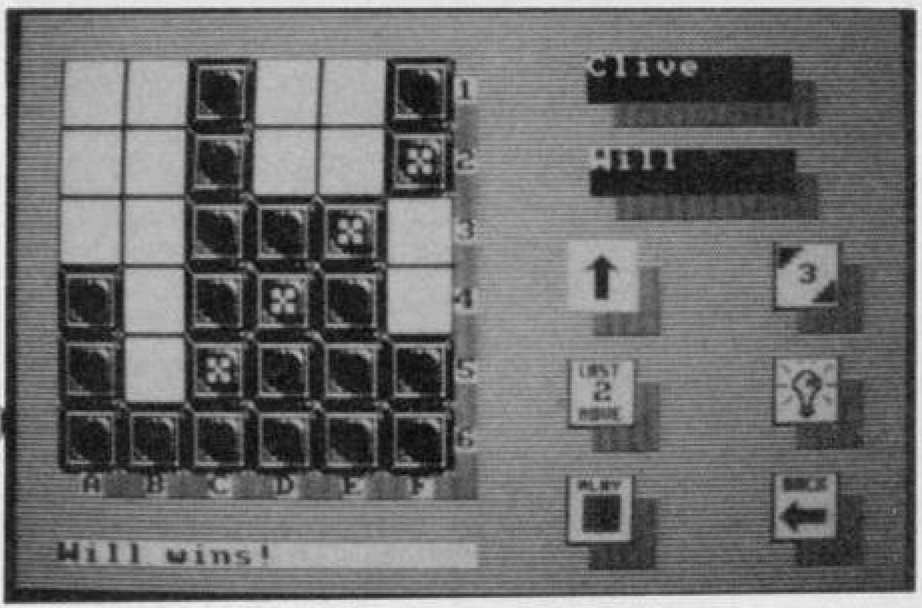
There's also a *Problem Mode* where you can either choose one of six preset problems and try to solve them, or set up your own problem for the computer or another person to solve.



CRITICISM

1 **Ariolasoft don't half come out with some strange games - *Think* being one of the strangest so far. The presentation is really very polished, featuring recognisable icons and lots of options which add a lot to the game. I found the computer a worthy opponent — but only just! The game always tended to end up in the same situation after a few moves which meant that once you'd worked out the right formulae for beating the computer on each level a win is guaranteed every time. One very strange option was a computer help bulb which I suggest you do not use unless you're in dire trouble, more often than not it suggested the wrong move and I ended up losing the game, which isn't much fun after a fifteen minute game. *Think* certainly makes you do just that, and kept me at it for along time. I suggest you buy it for a welcome change from bashing your joystick for hours on end. Get your thinking caps on!**

2 I can't really confess to being any sort of board games addict, and there fore regard this program with



indifference. Still, it's obviously got a lot of appeal to anybody who likes these sort of games, especially with its multitude of options. The computer plays reasonably well, and it takes a little practise before any *Thinking* proficiency is attained. The graphics are fine, although the counters do go all wobbly when they're shunted onto the board. The sound is really bad though, a sort of throttled squark which makes your foot want to meet the Amstrad's speaker at high velocity. If you're after an alternative thinking program then this one seems pretty good.

3 *I'm a real board games fiend, and I think* Think *is brilliant, just what I've been looking for! There are lots of options and game variations to puzzle over if you do get bored of it, which is highly unlikely. The graphics suit the game very well, and all the icons are excellently drawn so even thick wallies can see what they mean. The sound is a bit awful though, and I wish it had been left out, it's that bad. Still, it's an excellent game which should appeal to anyone who's gotten bored of shooting things.*

Presentation 94%
Really jolly icons an' fings with loads of options.

Graphics 71%
Nothing to go ape over, but functional to the game.

Sound 20%
AAAAAAAAAGGGH.

Playability 86%
There are plenty of options which give large playing potential.

Addictive qualities 85%
Once you've beaten your computer and friends you can always try the other options.

Value for money 76%
A bit expensive, but still good value for board fiends.

Overall 83%
An excellent alternative think em up.

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'The amount of different screens makes the game very playable, enjoyable, and more importantly, addictive. I would recommend this to any child between the ages of 8 and 80.' Amstrad User
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A CRASH Smash
You ain't seen nothing yet!

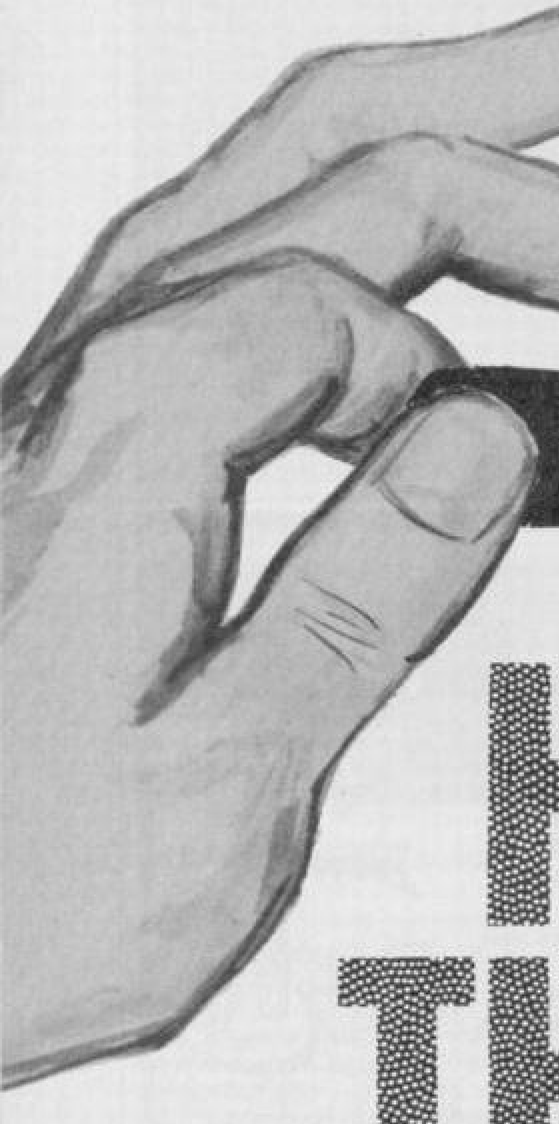
Well this is what I originally wrote:
Halls of the Things is very good indeed. It is about the best game I have had the honour of loading into the sacred orifices of my Amstrad. It's great. It's got purple pixels and white pixels and green pixels. It's even got token black ones! It will cure baldness, dropsy, anthrax, poverty, inequality and will leave your bath sparkling clean!! *Halls of the Things* is the best thing since man landing on the moon! Sorry Mr Armstrong but you're just not as interesting! This is a product worthy of a good grok from anybody. Buy it now to become a truly *whole* human being.

And I thought that was alright so I said to Design Design:
'Can I have the money in used fivers please?'

Then Jeremy caught on and wanted to be cut in as well. I wasn't going to let *him* have a piece of the action so the only thing to do was review it objectively and I haven't done that for a long time. So please bear with me, dear reader, as my style may be a bit ragged. Here goes:

Amstrad *Halls of the Things* is the resurrection of an ancient Speccy program that first appeared in 1983. It is so old that it is one of the few games not to have been reviewed in CRASH. Even so in its time it did cause quite stir. ZX Computing awarded it game of the year and said many a nice thing about it. *Halls of the Things* is a sort of arcade interpretation of the old dungeon and dragons adventure. The sort of thing that would warm the cockles of Keith Campbell's heart. As an adventurer into the *Halls of the Things* you must collect seven rings, one from each floor, and then collect the key from the basement to escape.

Sound simple? Well it's not. The things, whose hall you wander through, are particularly thingish and not into people at all. When you wander in it's all a bit of a shock. So they decide to try and kill you. Weapons of the Things are just as nasty as them and include arrows, lightning, fireballs and yet more arrows. You have these weapons as well plus the aid of your trusty **VORPAL** sword (wow)! Arrows are awkward to use but quite effective. The trouble is the direction has to be set with the cursor keys first. Whenever an arrow is released it whizzes off in the direction previously chosen. Lightning is more fun. Lightning can only really be activated when in line of sight of a thing. Represented as an asterisk, the lightning can whizz up and down



Design a deadly elastic band weapon and

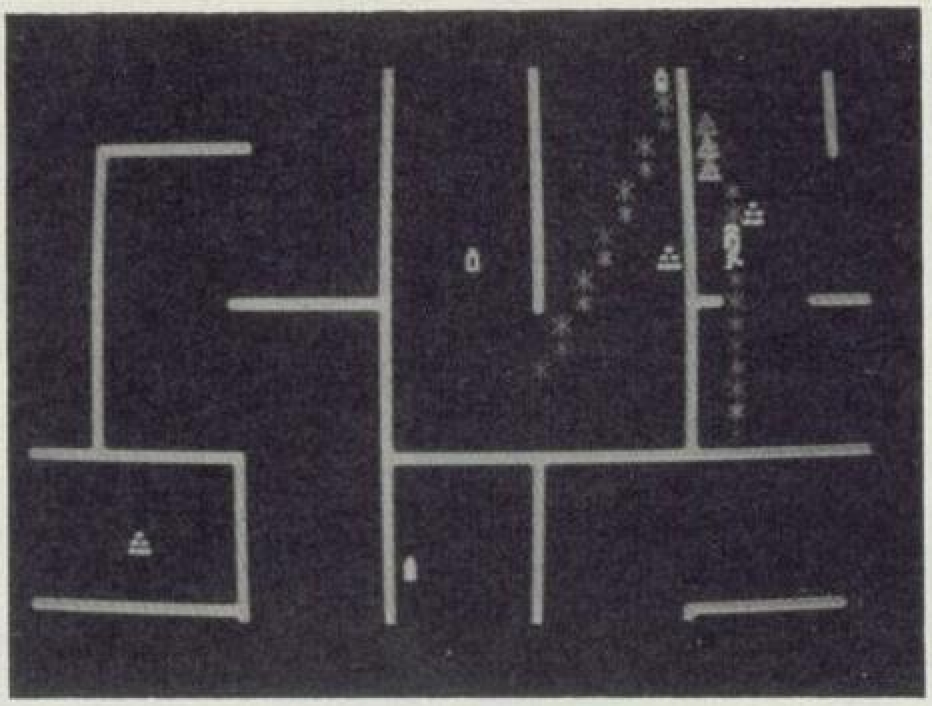
HALLS OF THE THINGS SUPER COMPETITION

the corridors, careering off the walls for a limited amount of time. The trouble is that if it flashes through you then you are harmed. A good tactic is to let off a whole stream of lightning that bounces up and down the corridors, wreaking mayhem until the Things diminish. Fireballs are neat as well, these home to the nearest live thing but only one can be unleashed at a time.

If, at any time during the game, you decide to bash the 1 key (a silly thing to do unless you know what it does) then the game goes into pause and a status screen pops into view. Vital information relating to magic status is shown on little histogram bars, wounds, dead Things and arrows. Magic is depleted by constant use of lightning and fireballs, while wounds are increased by getting wounded (a bit obvious I suppose).

Whilst in the status screen magic can be used to heal your injuries though a hefty slice of your mystic power is grabbed in return. If there's no magic left in your life then the use of fireball and lightning is prohibited to you.

Around the various corridors there are bottles filled with a mystical psyche regenerating liquid. Collect a bottle and the magic bar increases by an amount relative to the contents of the bottle. Remember, though, every Thing that lives within the halls also has magic, wounds and arrows. They can also pick up potions, just as you may, to replenish depleting strength. They may also, quite easily, kill themselves by unleashing bolts of lightning in confined spaces. Another feat worth accomplishing is collecting the treasure that some careless soul has left around the place.



Halls of the Things takes up the whole screen and shows the action through a plan view type perspective. You control your man via a contortionate keyboard layout that can be mastered but takes some perseverance. Though from your godlike view it's possible to see the things lurching up and down the corridors it is only possible to attack them when they are in your line of sight. Equally they are unable to see you into you are in their line of sight. The format is flip screen, though a bash on the space bar centres the hero and adjusts the scenery accordingly.

Other obstacles blocking way to finding the rings are the numerous doors barring several walkways. O for open and C for close are the keys needed to manipulate them. Cunning tactics involving the use of doors can be employed to total Things. A good one is to quickly unlock a door with Things behind it, let forth a large amount of lightning bolts and quickly seal the door again. The closed door now protects you from the rebounding bolts.

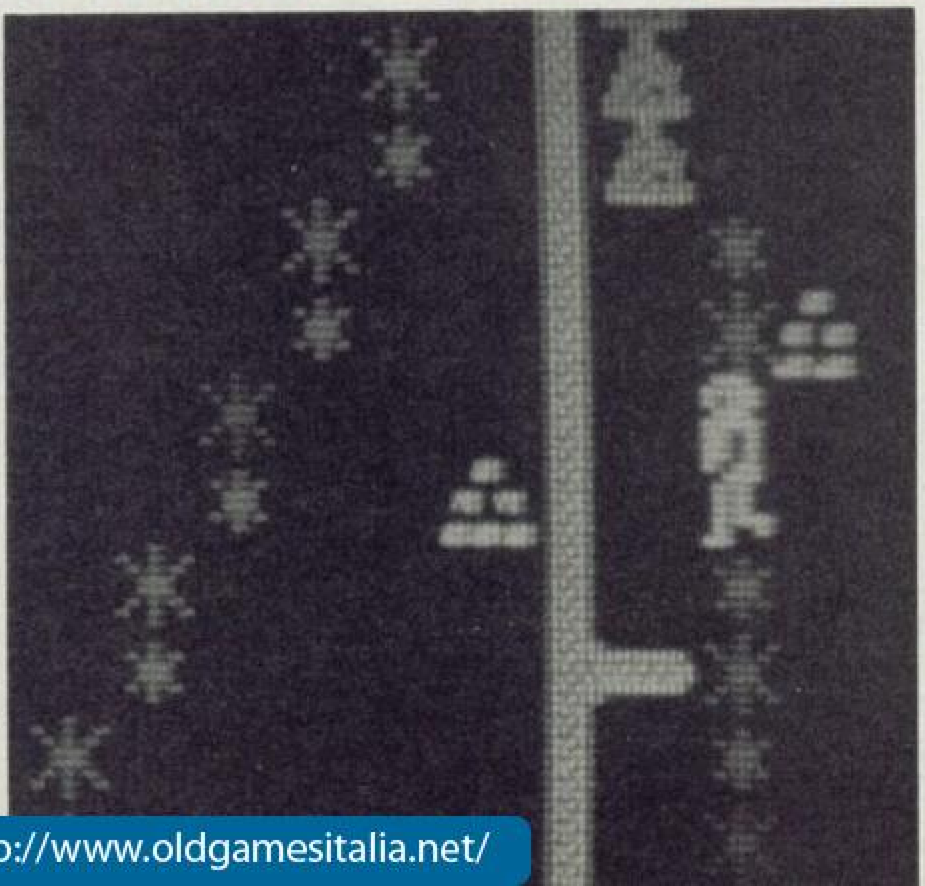
Each floor of the halls is huge and randomly generated at the start of each game. That includes the placing of Things, treasure and Rings. Overall *Halls* is a really great game and I honestly enjoyed it a lot. Though it may seem quite unsophisticated at first — the graphics aren't the best in the world — with a bit of staying power you should be able to get into the game underneath. Then you should find *Halls of the Things* not to be simple at all and discover the numerous strategic and tactical factors, along with the arcade influences, that make *Halls* what it is, a slice of computer history.

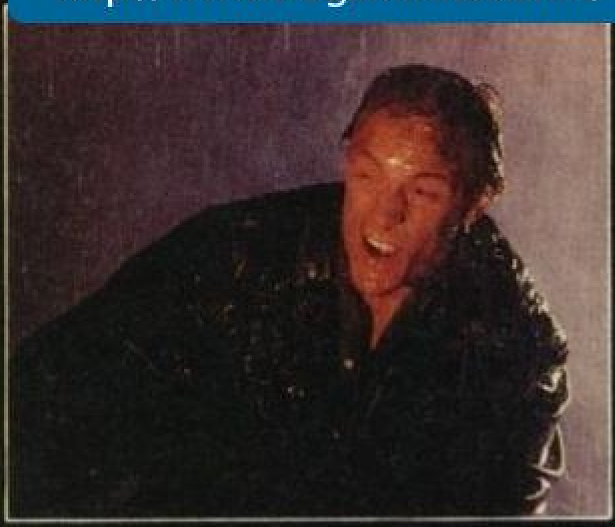
win a Design Design games compilation

When the persons, **Design Design**, last trotted down to sunny Ludlow things got a little hectic on meeting our own dear beloved mail order department. Upon seeing the lithesome young girls happily stuffing Jiffy bags, their most primordial and basic urges, latent in all young men, took hold of them. So with a spring and a cavort and a leap and a bound the Mancunian madmen grabbed hold of a box of laccy bands and started the now customary Design Design/Mail Order elastic band fight. Of course Editorial had to join in but despite our best efforts Newsfield's finest were pitifully vanquished.

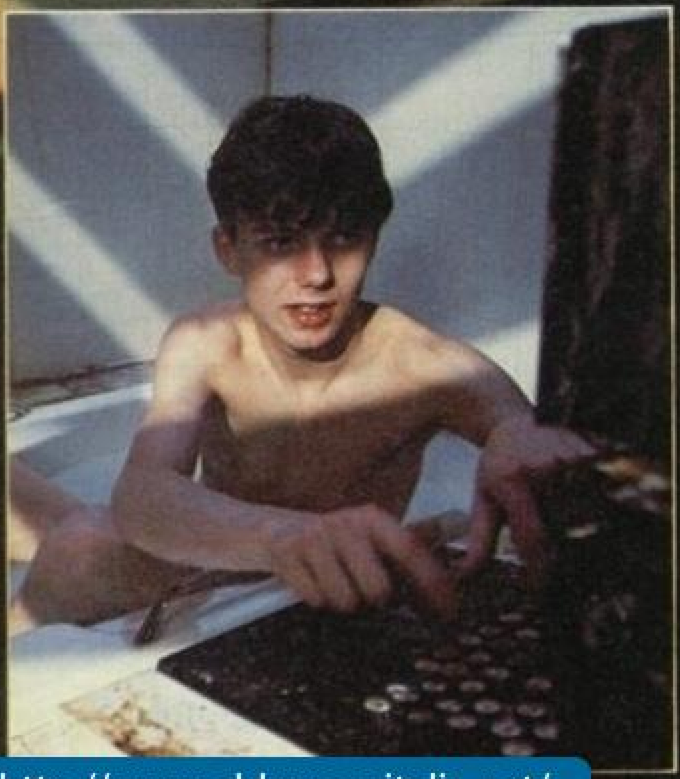
It's all a bit depressing really because the same thing happens every time they visit. I don't know what it is but armed with mere loops of elastic this northern software house is capable of bringing the staff of Britain's best Amstrad magazine to their knees. So really this is a plea for help. You see we're not awfully good with elastic bands and tend to end up pinging ourselves on the hand, much to the amusement of visiting software houses.

What we need you to do is design a deadly elastic band powered machine. Given such a weapon humiliation would no longer be ours. There are few rules to adhere to, just to stop Des Des shouting 'cheat'. Number one is that the weapons only power source must come from the elastic band. Rule number 2 specifies the projectile fired from the weapon must be pre-chewed bits of paper. So get designing now and submit all entries in the form of a drawing or a working prototype. Get your entries, addressed to **LACCY BAND COMP, AMTIX! PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**, here by the 20th March and the best fifty entries will each receive Design Design's *Working Backwards* compilation disk. Made to run on 464, 664 and 6128 it features such memorable past hits as *Dark Star*, *Tank Busters*, *On The Run* and *Halls of the Things*. Not only this but the lads at Des Des have also promised to include a mystery supa dupa game. Though a bit reticent about what the game is when asked 'Is it mega?' the reply came 'yes'. What better recommendation could there be than that?





What I want to know is...



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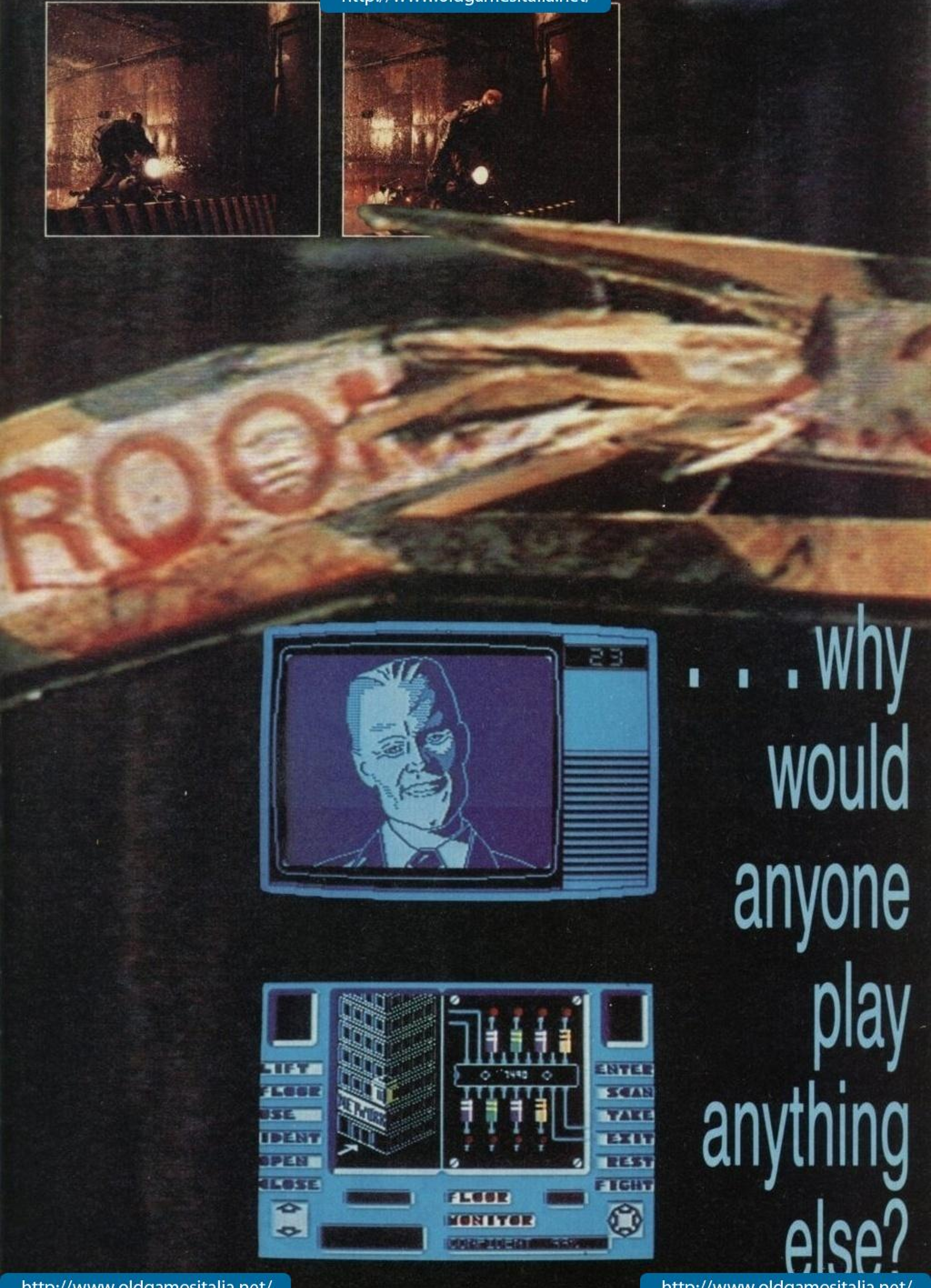

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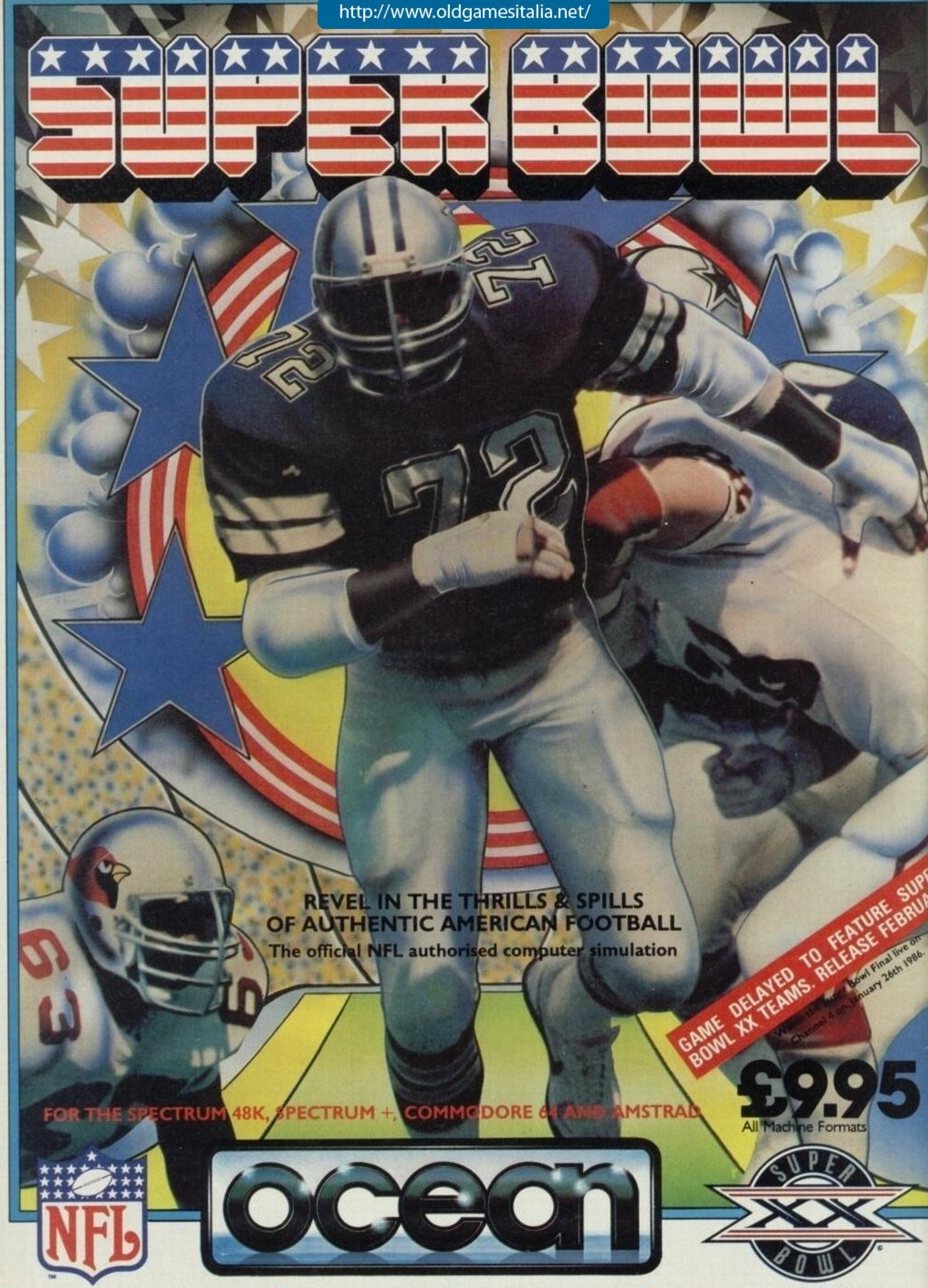

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A LOOK AT HONEYVIEW COMMSTAR

A member of the Ecclesiastical compset takes a look at communication software which comes with the Pace Nightingale Modem.

INTRODUCTION

The first thing you notice about Honeyview is it is available immediately on switching on — the joys of ROM! — though the disk operating system takes only seven seconds to load. The next is the ease of use. Every function has a pop-up menu, most with options, making operation very simple indeed once the method has been grasped. The menus immediately give the impression of a powerful but user-friendly program packaged in a most attractive format.

MODE AND COLOUR CHANGE

The first menu controls the mode change and ink colours (which can be changed in mode 1). Honeyview uses mode 0 to produce an accurate colour rendering with lettering which is at times a little 'chunky', but is easy to read and far superior to Amstrad's offering on their RS232 interface, also fully supporting graphics and dynamic frames. Mode 1 gives a better text if you juggle with the colours — but as each screen is different — it doesn't always help, though changing the colours can be useful sometimes.

TELESOFTWARE

Honeysoft have gone to great lengths to make each menu functional and easy to use. The *Telesoft* downloading is excellent, it worked perfectly on all the free programs and kept you informed as to the progress on the way. In fact, one could become addicted to watching the numbers twirl round as the download proceeds. I'm looking forward to trying some of the chargeable software when it is released.

SAVING PAGES TO FILE OR BUFFER

Saving and loading, of files and buffers to and from disc or screen, is very easy. The pop—up menu calls for Save, Load, Cat or Erase. Upon selection, a further menu appears with combinations of loading, saving instantly to and from Screen, Buffers and Files. The ability to instantly save pages for off—line viewing is a most useful feature. The Save to Buffer option really is instantaneous, just press 'Copy' to include the page number, the 'Enter' saves it. This is done in blocks of up to ten pages using the Buffers, then saving each ten page block as a file. These files can be recalled from disc and displayed via the Carousel feature, which allows you to flip through your pages— or displays them automatically, one a minute — a useful feature for a club night or advertising session. Disk management is taken care of through the Cat and Erase functions.

EDITING OFF-LINE

The software supports off—line editing and the program re—defines some function keys to make selection of colours and graphics very easy. When up—loading direct from the Edit mode is implemented, it will be a very useful and attractive option. In the meantime, you can practice as much as you like.

ASCII DUMP

The 'control 7' key produces an immediate ASC11 text dump of the current page. This operation is also available in Carousel mode so if used properly it will help with the phone bill during those long on—line sessions.

USER DEFINED KEYS

One of the friendliest functions is the user defined key. This makes it possible to reconfigure the function keys (to operate with the shift key), so they produce up to 32 characters each. Obvious uses are for logging on, MBX numbers, page numbers and even recurring text. Each configuration of the 10 keys can be saved to disk and recalled almost instantly. I found it useful to configure separate sets for different uses. 'KEYLOG' for logging on, 'KETMBX' for mailboxing saves remembering and typing in all those long numbers, 'KEYGAL' for gallery pages and editing and 'KEYCHAT' for Daisy Chatline and Bullet.

MANUAL

Though very detailed it is clear, readable and easy to understand. It also includes a brief introduction to PRESTEL for the beginner as well as details of operation with several different modems. There is much potential with this system and it will pay to read this exhaustive manual thoroughly.

OTHER OPTIONS

Other menus provide for the RS232 interface to be configured with different baud, parity and stop values. Switch to offline Edit mode; Change between disk and tape.

The complete list of menus is:

CTRL 0 — SCREEN Change mode/inks/clear screen
CTRL 1 — RS232 Configure the RS232 interface
CTRL 2 — FILE Save, load, catalogue and erase
CTRL 3 — TELESOFTWARE Download program when on-line
CTRL 4 — EDIT Switch to off-line edit mode
CTRL 5 — ONLINE Switch to on-line. Reset clock
CTRL 6 — CAROUSEL Display buffers off-line
CTRL 7 — PRINT Print screen (ASC11 characters only)
CTRL 8 — DISK Disk RSX commands/tape load
CTRL 9 — USER Define, load or save user key

CONCLUSION

Honeyview is one of the most user-friendly packages for the Amstrad to come my way. The pop-up menus make operation very easy. However, whilst it can be run from tape and will give good service, a disk drive is really needed to take full advantage of its potential.

The Telesoft downloading works very simply and keeps you well informed. The ability to save, load and edit pages off-line and display them automatically through the Carousel feature, is not only useful, but also saves you money and the user defined keys make on-line working so simple. The consideration of providing you with a clock to show you time elapsed on the system also tends to cut down the telephone bill. Honeysoft have pulled out all the stops to make their really user friendly and with the price of ROM — or disk — at £19.95 (tape price £14.95), it is a real bargain. Honeysoft tell me their upgrades will be at a reasonable cost — probably around £5 plus postage.

I understand Honeysoft are working on a professional version of Honeyview to be available early in the New Year. This will include full facilities for editing 'Gallery pages off-line with bulk up-load to Prestel. Off-line MBX preparation and automatic sending, when on-line, will also be there together with ability to define default keys, support for scrolling viewdata and a new screen mode 2 for greater clarity. I understand, too, the software for 'Joyce' is under development and should be available shortly. With all these goodies in the pipe-line, I'm beginning to look forward to this year.

Rev Stafford Simmonds

MIND THE DRILL

DAVID PAUL looks at some educational games and reminds parents of some of the pitfalls encountered with computers in education.

A recent Amsoft catalogue lists 12 programs under the heading of 'Education' and 67 under the heading of 'Arcade Games' and 11 of the educational programs are conversions of programs originally written with the BBC computer in mind. They were aimed either at schools which had just received their government micro and were looking for something better than the often mediocre quality software that was provided by the accompanying micro pack, or parents who were looking for educational programs in the High Street. At that time the 32K BBC computer was considered an adequate home computer and great play was made of its educational potential.

Many of the early educational programs were of the drill, 'load and leave them' variety. These proved very popular with computer illiterate headmasters, teachers and parents because it meant you could introduce the child to the computer, load the program and then leave the two of them to get on with it. This approach meant that with in the big three subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic, children got 'hands on' experience with computers without interfering with any particular teaching approach. In the home many parents felt that drill programs were doing something with the technology instead of just playing arcade games. The objects and aims of the program were familiar so that they could help their children. The fact that parents and children could be sitting down together looking at school work is a considerable plus for this type of program as is the fact that many children find computers highly motivational.

Teachers who preferred the 'set it and forget' style of the drill approach had a point too — for such a sophisticated teaching machine as a computer should be able to cope with many teaching situations. Unfortunately, more often than not, the software simply could not cope, for it was designed to fit into machines with limited memory

HAPPY WRITING (Amsoft)

As its name implies, this program is designed to help young children with letter formation in either small letters (lower case) or capital letters and is intended for children aged between 3 to 6 years old which of course includes pre-school children working at home with their parents.

After a four and a half minutes loading time the first program screen presents a menu with six options, letters in either upper or lower case or numbers can be practised or any word up to ten characters long can be entered, the built-in word list of ten words can be changed for a list of your own choosing with the maximum of ten letters for each word. The final option 'set the writing speed' allows you to change the speed of the letters as they are formed on the screen.

Selecting the first option — to practise one by one, presents a screen asking you to enter big letters, small letters or numbers. Then, whichever letter or number is struck on the keyboard, is drawn on the screen very slowly by a large dot that appears at the point from which the child should start to copy the letter using a crayon or a pencil. This process is repeated three times for each character. The child is then asked to enter their name which appears superimposed on the drawing of a pencil on the screen. The three letters are then repeated as before, this time with the dot representing the 'magic pencil'. Guidelines for the letters are drawn across the screen by two slow and noisy tractors and sound is used to denote a high or low drawing point.

A series of letters and words are treated in exactly the same way. The option to change the word list is well done and it is a very easy matter to enter a new list of ten words of the teacher or parents' choice. Even after setting the writing speeds the program is ponderously slow and lacks playability, most children would find it tedious after having seen it once and adults in a one to one relationship with a child could find it hard going to keep interest alive. Pre-school workbooks which deal with letter formation techniques can be much more fun and a lot more convenient to use — and a lot cheaper.

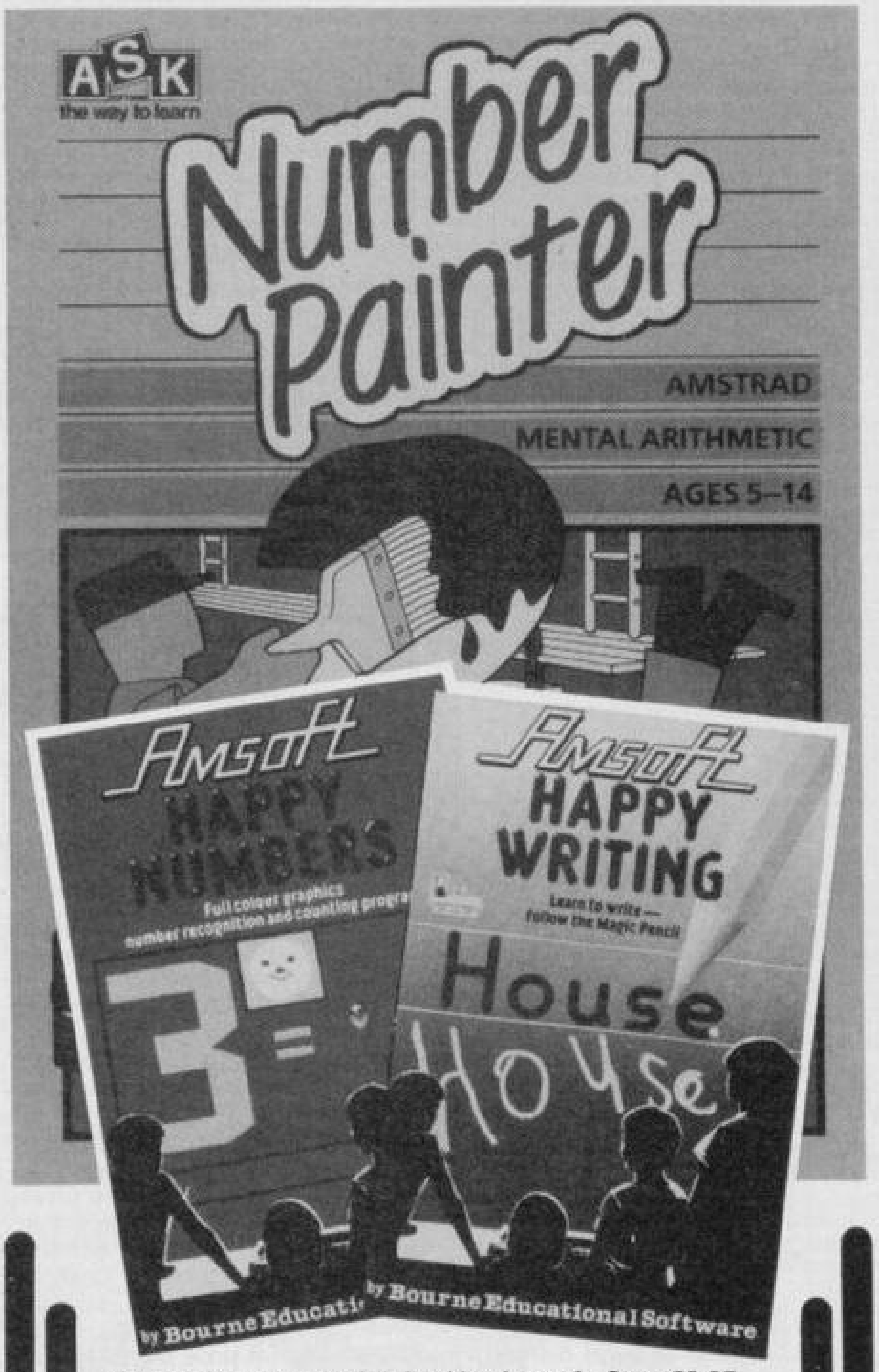
HAPPY NUMBERS (Amsoft)

Happy Numbers is designed to teach pre-school children the idea of counting from one to nine and number recognition. On loading the opening screen presents a menu with three choices, starting the program, setting the number sequence — and a monitor which can be called up by an adult to review progress.

After answering the request for the child's name, a small face appears upper mid-screen, there is a number which fills the screen from top to bottom to the left of the face, the space to the right being initially blank. The task set the child is to recognise the number and to tap the corresponding key that number of times. Apart from the escape key, all other keys on the computer have been immobilised by the software with only the correct key to match the screen in operation. If the on screen number is five then tapping the '5' key five times produces five colourful flowers on the right of the screen. If the Enter key is now pressed a tune plays and the face smiles and the number glows with bright colours.

An incorrect response causes the face to look sad and a number corresponding to the number of flowers entered by the child replaces the first number. Only then is the correct answer shown — a very good teaching point.

The ability to set a number sequence means that a child having difficulty in recognising a particular number or numbers can be given practice in recognising them. By reverting to the main menu and using option three, an adult can see a review screen showing correct and incorrect responses for the program. The program had more child appeal than *Happy Writing* but achieves little more than the usual plastic numerals with pegs to fit them in — although it would help very young children become accustomed to using a keyboard and stop them from feeling left out of things.



Happy Numbers published by Amsoft, Cass £8.95
Happy Writing published by Amsoft, Cass £8.95
Number Painter published by A.S.K., Cass £8.95
All programs are fully compatible with the CPC 6128

NUMBER PAINTER (ASK Software)

This is in a different category altogether. At first glance *Number Painter* looks like the popular arcade game in which the player guides an on-screen figure climbing ladders and running along different levels whilst avoiding pursuing aliens and other pitfalls in addition to trying to beat the clock. There are no monsters or aliens to zap here though, just a painter on a building site who needs your help to paint out the necessary numbers which can be positive or negative, in order to reach a randomly set target.

There are twelve levels of difficulty ranging from level one with target numbers in the range of one to ten and using the operations of addition and subtraction only, to level twelve with targets in a range from 700 to 999, using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. You can also decide which of the four painters to employ starting with the rather slow Mr Plod and going up to the very fast Mr Speedy. They are punctuated by Mr Walker and Mr Swift with Mr Speedy, at the highest level of difficulty, being stretching for most adults.

Screen displays are very well done, when you select your level the painter gives you a friendly wave and sets off to work in a bucket hoist. If you allow your painter to fall through a gap he takes on a dazed appearance and there is a short pause before the game resumes — but the displayed target number has changed making your task harder. You must be careful to work within the time limit for whilst you are helping your painter a bucket of a paint is slowly being hoisted to the top level and if it should reach the top before you have achieved your target it spills to flood the site and you have to start again.

Children using the program thought that it was terrific and had to be prised away from the computer — yet they had been working very hard practising their mental arithmetic. The program also attracted the attention of any adult who happened to be in the vicinity.

Lots of mathematics for children in the age range 5-14 years (and adults!). Very addictive and useful for home or school.

BURP!

EAT YOUR WAY TO HEALTH WITH STRADDLES

Thin, not very short but decidedly strange-looking AMTIX! Food Correspondent, Luke Hayter casts aside his love of junk food and examines a mine of nutritional information presented on the screen of Jeremy (Dieting Endlessly) Spencer's Amstrad. YOUR HEALTH is the program and HiSoft are the authors.

Your Health was a bit of a surprise for me as it is a radical departure from the more usual high quality programming utilities and languages that HiSoft have launched in the past. It is still a high quality product, but is a helpful and informative program rather than a useful program.

The object seems to be to educate people about food and the nutritional value of what they eat, and then to give simple guide lines to a healthy diet. It doesn't claim to be a dieting or slimming system, just a way of pointing out deficiencies in your lifestyle caused by the contents of your pantry. Once you've discovered a dietary shortcoming, you can look through information on different foods, examine the statistics and start leading a healthier life. In theory at least.

The program comes with very little documentation. Instructions as to the way the program should be loaded and run are not given. Once you have typed RUN'YHL' followed by ENTER, the program loads and you are presented with a menu(!).

MENUS, MENUS

The menus used throughout the program are all very easy to follow, making the program a joy to use. They take the form of a numbered list of items. The program asks you for the number of the option you wish to select and you then press ENTER to input your choice.

The first section gives you information on minerals and vitamins. There is a brief description of which foods each substance is found in, and how it effects the human body. Fifteen vitamins and twelve minerals are described.

The second section gives details of the energy, protein, some mineral and some vitamin counts in different foods. There are seven different classifications: dairy products; fish; cereals; vegetables; drinks and sweets; meats and fruits. Each classification has a submenu that lists specific foodstuffs on which further details are available.

Your daily diet is the subject of the third portion you may select from the main menu. You have to enter details of your height, weight and so on, whereupon you are told the amounts of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals you should be consuming each day. If you take the results from this section you can use Section Two to find the foods you like to eat and then work out a balanced selection of foods that give you the required nutritional values and satisfy you palate.

Section Four allows you to devise a healthy diet for a family of up to 15 people. Once details for each member of the family have been entered, the results may be used to plan shopping trips that will keep the whole family healthy.

EXPERTS

A medical Expert System follows as the fifth option on the main menu. It asks for a variety of information about your health and then suggests reasons for any ailments from which you might be suffering if they might be related to your diet.

The sixth and final section gives some ideas on how to lose (or gain) weight. You give the computer some details about yourself and it advises you if you might be over or under weight. Based on its first deduction about your physical bulk, the computer then suggests how to modify your diet so as to allow you to approach your target weight safely.

There is an option on each screen to copy the information on it to the printer — useful if you want to be able to compare two or more food stuffs at a glance later on, or if you are trying to balance a meal.

The program is well presented with colour used to make headings and other important information stand out. The only problem with this is that sometimes the colour schemes could have been chosen to give better contrast. The program is silent unless you try to select a option that does not exist on the current menu, when you are rewarded with a beep.

LIMITED APPEAL?

Although driven by excellently linked menus, this program gives access to information which will appeal to a limited number of people. People studying subjects such as Food and Nutrition, teachers of the same subjects, doctors, possibly, and other professionals concerned with the technical side of diet might find it especially useful. A larger database containing suggested meals, more detailed descriptions of the nutritional values of foods and the offering the user the option to compare different foodstuffs on screen would have been useful.

This said, the program is informative and has some applications, though rather limited. I would suggest that anyone with more than a fleeting interest in diet take a look at this excellent program.

Luke Hayter

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LASER BASIC

LASER BASIC is an extension to the standard LOCOMOTIVE BASIC on the Amstrad. Written by OASIS SOFTWARE and published by OCEAN under the Ocean IQ label, it can be used on the Amstrad CPC 464/664/6128 computers. £14.95 cass, £19.95 disk.

INTRODUCTION

Most people's immediate purchase, after the major one of the computer itself, is some games — even the 'serious' user, if honest, will admit to this. And why not? It's often the best way of rapidly assessing the machine's potential. Soon after, the 'serious' and less serious user tend to approach each other's territory in the desire to actually write games, and across the board, software houses have always been bringing out utilities for this very purpose. *Laser Basic* is such a program.

It comes packaged in a large video style case which opens to reveal two cassettes and an instruction manual. The cassettes hold *Laser Extended Basic*, *Laser Basic Demo*, a sprite designer and a sound generator. *Laser Extended Basic* provides a series of RSX (Resident System Extension) commands which means that each command must be prefixed by the bar symbol. All the commands can be mixed with normal Locomotive BASIC so you are losing none of the functions normally available from Locomotive. However, once loaded, *Laser Basic* only leaves you with 15K for the actual program you want to write. This presents a disadvantage to the novice programmer, but *Laser Basic* offsets this drawback since its power obviates the need for that lost memory as long as you consider the design of your program and are sensible about your use of the remaining memory. Besides, writing the graphic and sound controlling routines yourself without such a utility as *Laser Basic* would take far longer and be less flexible.

USING THE LASER

Laser Basic adds over 200 new commands to the normal BASIC and these allow fine control over the screen, sprites, and sound. By mixing the normal BASIC variables, loops and program flow structures and the control of graphics and sound afforded by the program there is great potential for the would-be games designer.

Sprites are the main concern of *Laser Basic* and the graphics commands for controlling the screen consist of defining sprites; scrolling them up, down, left or right, with wraparound or without, up to 17 sprite windows (the program allows for the definition of up 120 individual sprites). Expansion of parts, mirror imaging and rotation of the information in a window is all available through simple commands, and within the commands there are many options which give a large degree of freedom, allowing the fastest type of sprite to be chosen to suit your needs.

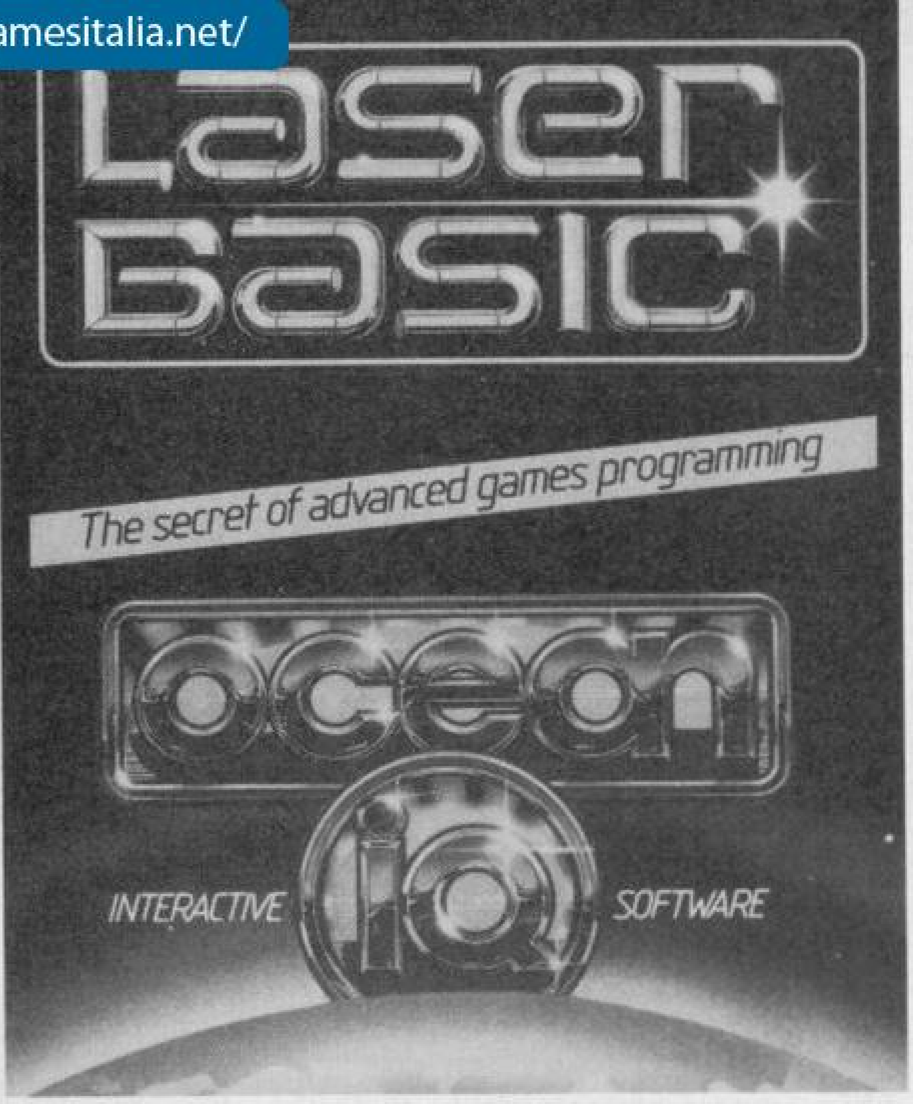
Sprites can be displayed in different ways; logical **OR, AND** and **XOR**, XOR being similar to the way *Sorcery* handles sprites. The sprites can be made to pass in front of the information already on the screen or behind it. Collision detection is also available but it slows down the program's operation while it does this. Sprites can be put under direct joystick or keyboard control and also made to 'bounce' off the edges of predefined windows automatically.

Unfortunately it's only possible to design and edit sprites by using the Sprite Generator which is inconvenient when you are learning to use *Laser Basic*, but does mean more memory being available for your program. Screens can be compressed to save memory and the compacted screens can be recalled and displayed very quickly. Additionally there are commands to allow programs to be operating in the 'background' while the main program is running, similar to the normal BASIC **EVERY** command.

LASER SOUND

Although there is only one sound command, **PLAY**, there are some 20 subset 'instructions' ensuring that proper sound can be added to your program. Again, it is only possible to define tunes by using the supplied Sound Generator on the second cassette. There are commands to define volume and tone envelopes, control the three sound channels on the Amstrad and play notes. The tunes you define can be made to play while the game continues to operate.

In assembling either sound or graphics routines, there are several commands that are needed to make sure that *Laser Basic* knows what you are doing and does not corrupt the data you have given to your program. Some functions are provided to allow you to find out if an action you are about to try is possible, that is, will not destroy any previous data of importance or that there is enough memory to actually perform the action. In this, and many other respects, *Laser Basic* proves to be friendly and helpful in use — rather a lot more so than the manual . . .



LASER JARGON

As I said, sprites are the important aspect of this program and are therefore given the largest chunk of the 130 page manual.

It's very long and very comprehensive, covering all areas of *Laser Basic* in great detail. And here lies the second drawback for the novice programmer. The detail is often obscure and relies heavily on an existing and well founded knowledge of the subject. The glossary of terms used is the first important part to read for the rest of the manual to be understood, and the rest must be read from cover to cover, doing the worked examples as they occur, or there is little chance you will get the most from the program. The detail sometimes gets very technical as it tries to explain the reason for any limitations of a command, gives a worked example, and then dashes on to the next command. It would have been better to explain a command to a standard level, go through an example and then give any necessary technical detail needed when using the command. It seems strange that Oasis should have come up with such a daunting manual when you consider the excellence of their earlier Spectrum *White Lightning* package, with its extremely friendly manual.

IN CONCLUSION

The graphic and sound generating programs are an absolute necessity to get the most out of *Laser Basic*. These programs must be loaded into the Amstrad with *Laser Basic* already present and are menu-based for the main options. Each option has its own control keys where needed. They are both easy to use and are powerful utilities, equal to *Laser Basic* itself.

Laser Basic is a fine and worthy extension to Locomotive BASIC but it does have some disadvantages. The manual is too detailed and could easily swamp somebody with little idea of the techniques of games programming. The commands are much closer to machine code mnemonics than BASIC and their meanings are less clear. If you try to have lots of sprites running the program becomes slower and if a routine is running in the 'background' the speed is even less. I found that writing any action game with *Laser Basic* required the same amount of thought, as far as design and finishing is concerned, as a comparable all-machine code program.

Laser Basic will be complemented by a *Laser Basic Compiler*. I would suggest that both programs will be required, and this should greatly increase the use of *Laser Basic* as an action game tool.

This program is a very well designed and implemented utility which allows the creation of games without the need to write the reasonably complicated machine code required to control sound and graphics simultaneously, but it still requires the user to have a reasonable knowledge of the theory of machine code. If you are considering using *Laser Basic* you should seriously think about spending a little more time and learn machine code in the form of assembler. **Oasis Software** must be congratulated for designing and implementing this useful and easy to use package, and **Ocean** must be cheered for releasing it.

Luke Hayter

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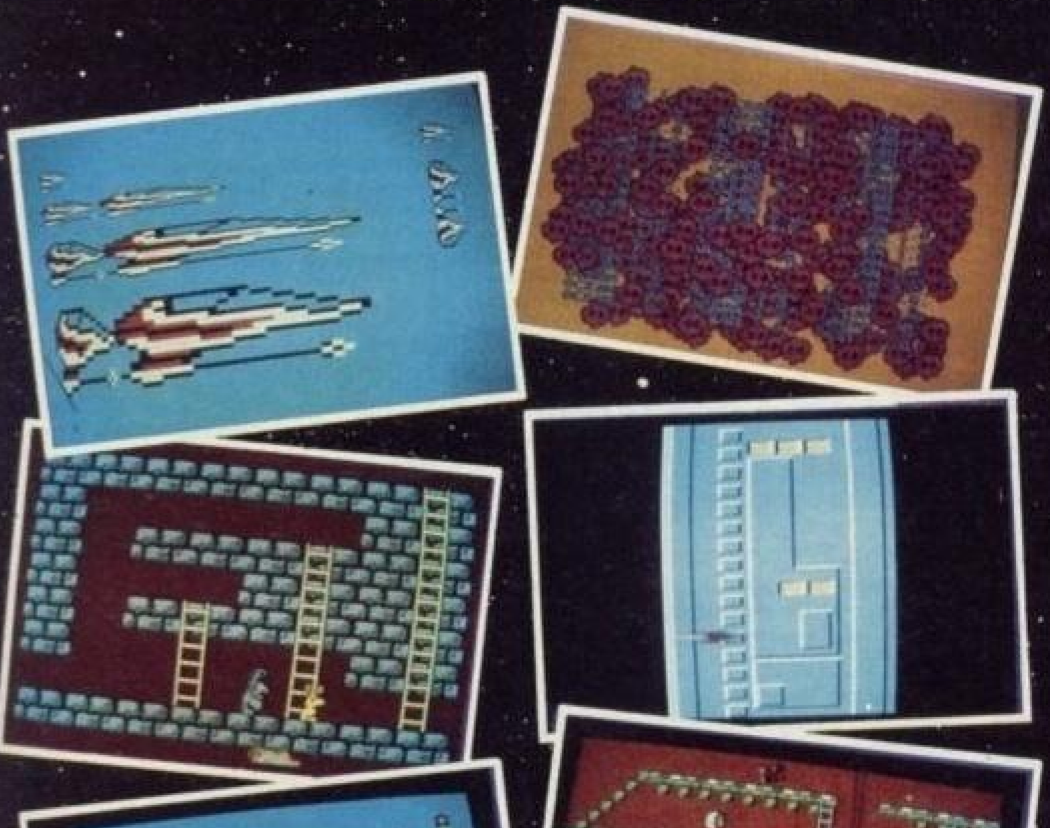

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CP/M IN BUS

Probably one of the main attractions of CP/M for the home computer user is that it gives him the possibility of using his machine for serious business type applications as well as the usual game playing, and possibly a little programming practice. It is not until one uses a computer with an operating system such as CP/M and disk drives that the full possibilities of the business and serious uses of computers becomes apparent.

Although there have been one or two machines such as the Apple and TRS80 which did have a reasonable amount of decent software available and possibly even the BBC, the software for these does not really compare with the quality and quantity available for CP/M. Business software tends to fall into three main categories -**WORDPROCESSING**, **DATABASE** and **SPREADSHEET**. Of course there are many other categories such as communications, graphics project planning and so on, but these are still the backbone of business computing. The best known programs associated with these applications are **WORDSTAR**, **DBASE II** and **SUPERCALC**. Since these programs were first introduced many developments in software have taken place and they are beginning to look a bit dated compared with some of the recent 'do it all' integrated IBMPC packages. The applications they handle are however still the basis for most of the requirements of a small business system.

DIS-INTEGRATED SOFTWARE

Even spreadsheet/database/wordprocessor packages most small businesses need can be filled by separate programs. Probably the only area where the 16 bit machine has a real advantage is for large spread sheets as most of the spread sheet programs, such as **SUPERCALC**, when run under CP/M have only 20k or so of RAM left for the spread sheet, but even this will be found sufficient for many business applications.

DATABASE APPLICATIONS

Probably the best known database program is **DBASE II** produced by Ashton Tate. **DBASE II** is actually more like a special language dedicated to the handling of data files than anything else.A database file is made up of records. Each record is made up of fields. In **DBASE II** there may be a maximum of 32 fields per record. A typical application would be a name and address file. The lines containing the first name, second name, address, town , post code etc. are the fields, and the whole set of fields connected with one entry make up one record. In **DBASE II** and most data-base systems, the structure of a database file is fixed once chosen, so some planning ahead is needed when deciding how big the fields should be and how many there should be. Most database use this fixed record and field idea as does **CREATOR**.

CREATOR

Unfortunately **DBASE II** is not in the public domain but **Creator** is. **Creator** is actually a program generator; it does not handle or make databases itself but it writes programs which do. It is certainly not up to **DBASE II** in quality, but it is good enough for many simple database applications and it is 'free'. There are two parts to **CREATOR**, Creator itself and **REPORTER**. Reporter is another program generator which writes programs which will produce printed and screen reports of the contents of Creator database files. Both Creator and Reporter require some version of the Basic language, fairly compatible with Microsoft Basic, to run. They are not supplied as directly executable .COM files, but come as BASIC source programs, however this does have the advantage that you can modify them if you want to. When you first run Creator it will ask you for the definitions of the fields required, ie length, character or numeric, type of prompt to use, any calculated fields etc. When the fields have been defined to your satisfaction, Creator will then generate a basic source program which will create and handle a data base to the specifications given. The generated program has functions to add records, delete them, scan, update(edit) and look up. Reporter works in much the same way. Once you have set up your database with Creator, the same field and record specifications plus details of how the reports are to be formatted, are fed into Reporter which then writes a Basic program to produce reports from the database file. Creator and Reporter are supplied on UK Volume 25 for the CP/M version, (this volume also has a scientific spread sheet program called **OXSTAT** and a DBase 2 program for making form letters and label printing), there is also an MSDOS version of **CREATOR** on PC-SIG volume 339.

WORD-PROCESSING

There have been many long dissertations about the merits or otherwise of various word- processing programs, so we won't go into another here. However, there are some points which are rarely mentioned which if not taken into account can mean wasting money on an unsuitable program. When producing program source files for **BASIC, PASCAL, ASSEMBLER, DBASE II** and most other languages, what is required is a file which contains plain ASCII without any control characters apart from:- tab (control I), carriage return (control M), line feed(control J) and control Z to mark end of file. Most word-processor programs use special non-ASCII characters to do operations such as right hand justification, indents and other special features. While these features are very desirable for producing nice looking documents they do not go down at all well in program files. If you want to use your word- processor program to write program files make sure you get one which will produce standard ASCII text files as well as document files. Wordstar for example has a document and non-document mode for this purpose.

BIG FILES

Another valuable feature is the ability to work with files which are bigger than can be fitted in memory. This will be particularly important to someone wanting to write in assembler, as assembler source files are commonly 10 to 20 times bigger than the end program produced. 100K files are not uncommon.

TEXT FORMATTERS

This is the name usually given to another type of word processor. With this system the Editor part of the program is separate from the printing function. What usually happens with this kind of set up is that the Editor just produces a standard ASCII file. To print it out another part of the program is run which does any special page formatting, justification etc. To achieve the desired formatting, special printing directive commands have to be placed in the text file to be printed. These are usually in the form of dot commands. For example **.in 5** indents the text 5 spaces, or **.ce** centres the text and so on. This type of text formatter can produce some very fancy formatting, but they are harder to use than the ones which just print out what you see on the screen. One of the better known of these is **ROFF**. This is a very sophisticated program which can print scientific characters and many other things. **ROFF** is a public domain program and is available on CUG volume 35. Another public domain program of this kind is 'The Secretary' which is on US Volume 92. This program com-

INESS

bines an editor and text formatter.

TEXT EDITORS

This is the name usually given to wordprocessor type programs which are mainly used for producing program source files in standard ASCII. They do not usually have facilities for justifying text, paging, print formatting and other document type features. Many text editors are awful things like the dreaded 'ED' which comes with CP/M.

A POOR MANS WORDSTAR

One of the best text editors I have tried is a public domain program called VDO25. It does have some disadvantages; it can't be used for files that are too large to fit into memory. This limits file size to about 50K, and it will not do right margin justification, or work out page breaks. Apart from this it is an excellent program for many applications. VDO25 functions very much like Wordstar. In fact, most of the keystrokes do exactly the same as they do in Wordstar, so if you have used that famed wordprocessor, you will certainly be very much at home with VDO. Although VDO was primarily intended as a handy text editor for programmers who did not require the document producing features of Wordstar itself, it does have some of these features. It can, for instance, print out files and it is possible to include printer control characters in the text for bold, underline, condensed etc. Some of the nice things about VDO are that it is quite a lot faster than Wordstar as it does not have those overlay files to pull in from disk; it is small only 7k, and best of all it's free!(well nearly). Like Wordstar, VDO has to be installed for the computer it is to run on and is supplied with an install program to do this. The current install program has about 20 computer types to choose from, but even if your machine is not on the list, (Murphy's law was it ?), then it's not too difficult to patch in your own screen codes as these are contained in a little table 300 bytes in from the beginning of the file. VDO25 is on CPMBBUK volume 9.

MORE ON THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

One of the things I'm commonly asked about these Public Domain programs is 'what about documentation ?'. Well the answer to this is that usually on the same disk with the program there are some text files called README.DOC, MANUAL.TXT, INSTALL.DOC, or something similar. These are text files which you can view on the screen with the 'TYPE' command or print out using 'PIP LST:FILENAME '. These files should give sufficient information to enable you to install and use the program. All of the volumes mentioned are obtainable for £2.00 plus 50p post and packing per volume, (you supply the disk), from the PD Software Library, 138 Holtye Rd, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 3EA Tel 0342-313883

Next month we will take a look at the item that newcomers to CP/M often have trouble with- 'Installing Programs.'

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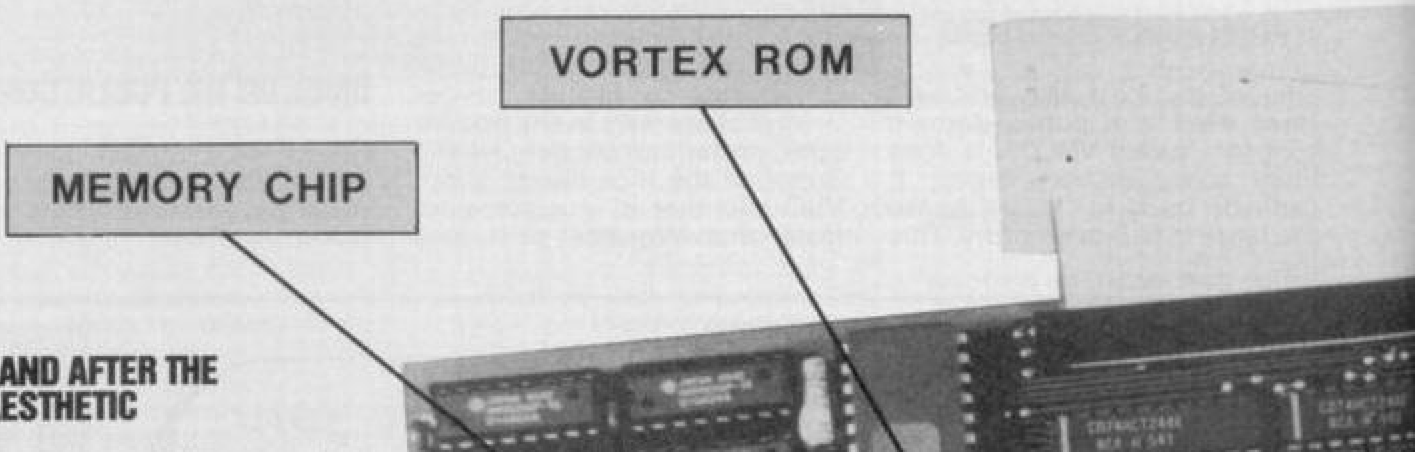
THE 464 PLUS 'SU

Screens, a distribution company have signed up with the leading German hardware supplier Vortex to market a new range of hardware for the Amstrad. The first product is a massive expansion board for the CPC464. Jeremy Spencer takes his Straddles' life in his hands and has a go.

THE SURGERY

I have to admit, that once I opened the large cardboard box and let the gismo within lose, my excitement turned to trepidation — how was I, a clumsy, fumbling Amster, to get this large and delicate piece of wizardry into my 464. There was little consolation in the realisation that my warrenty had expired and so could not be voided by my fumblings. My track re cord with things electronic/mechanical was sufficiently poor to make Straddles break out into a cold sweat. Nevertheless I armed myself with a posidrive screwdriver and a carving fork (I couln't find a small screw driver). After a cursory glance at the booklet I convinced myself this was an operation that any idiot could perform — being well qualified I began.

I had seen the inside of my Straddles once before (we have that kind of relationship), but this second visit was a real eye opener — the dust that had gathered inside would have filled a Hoover bag. Two chips had to be removed before the board could be fitted. The first, the Zilog Z80A wasn't too worrying, after all these days you can pick these things up from good hardware shops and high street chemists. The second chip was the Amstrad special, not quite so easy to come by — life being what it is — this was the hardest to get at, especially with a carving fork. After some struggling I managed to release both chips and it only took me 10 minutes to straighten the legs. After this first stage I really got into the swing of things. All I had to do now was plug in the board, put the chips back in their new homes, flatten a few components, place an insulating film under the Vortex board and, finally, screw the computer back together again. All in all the task took about an hour, but that included watching bits of **Cagney and Lacey**.



. . . AND AFTER THE ANAESTHETIC

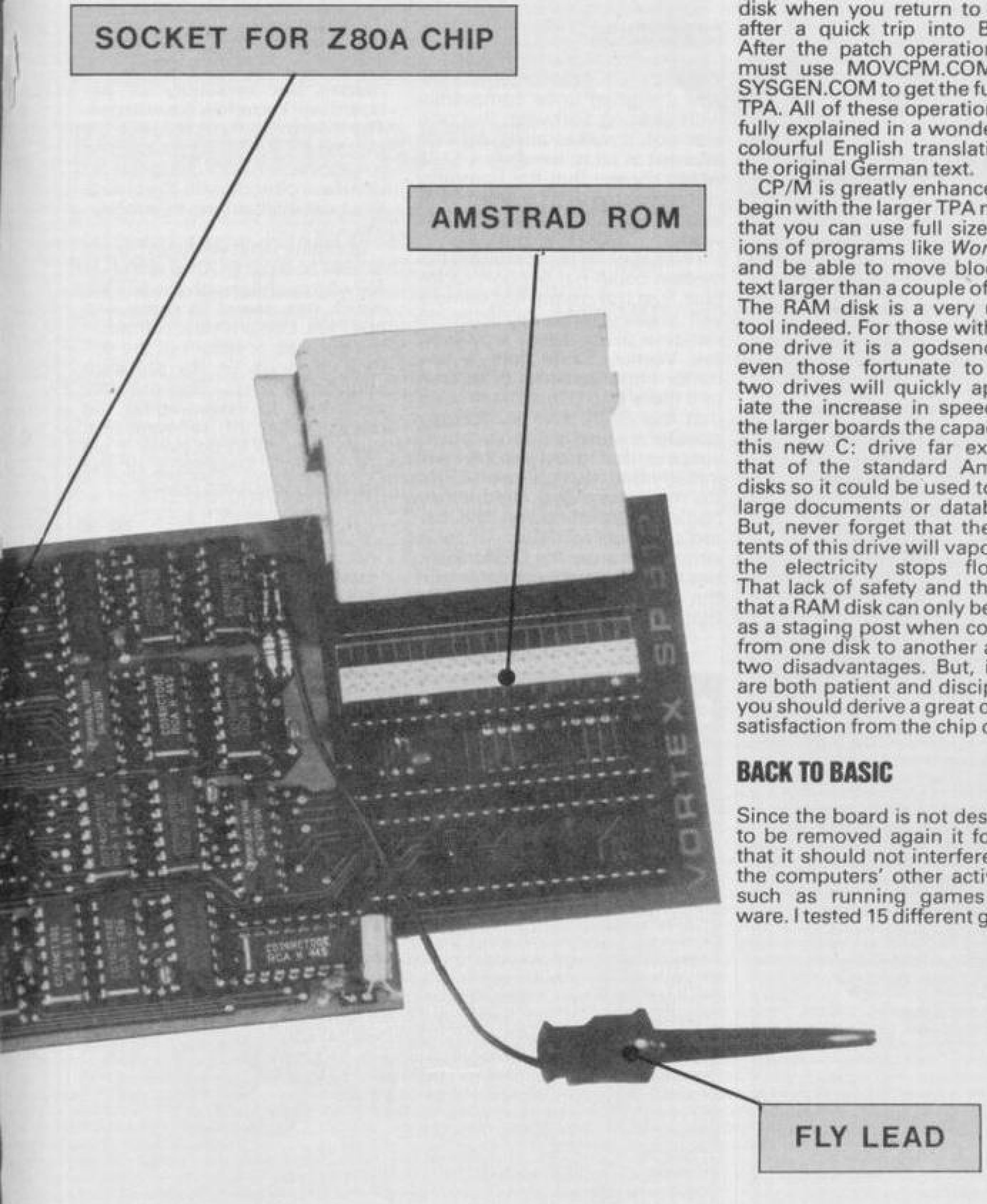
The most worrying part was turning the computer on, my hand was shaking so much I had trouble getting to the switch. To my delight everything worked perfectly. The Vortex ROM signs on with a massive message taking up eight lines — a boon to those seeking oneupstraddlesship by having so many ROMs away that the screen has to scroll up to accommodate the sign on messages. The extra facilities implanted inside your computer depends on the type of board you purchase. The smallest board is the SP64, the largest being the SP512. All boards except the 512k version are expandible. The table below will give you an idea of how the boards differ.

PATCH UP CP/M

The first feature I tried was the RAM disk so this meant preparing a special CP/M disk. First a program called PATCH.COM must be loaded onto disk from cassette. When this is run it sets about altering the two system tracks, and produces three new COM files; OSC, RAMDISK and SPOOL. The latter two files format the RAM disk or toggle the printer buffer on or off. If you like you can use PATCH to format the RAM disk and turn on the printer buffer automatically when you boot up CP/M, but this will mean cleaning out the RAM

You wouldn't think there would be room for all this inside a 464

PER STRADDLES'



disk when you return to CP/M after a quick trip into BASIC. After the patch operation you must use MOVCPM.COM and SYSGEN.COM to get the full 60K TPA. All of these operations are fully explained in a wonderfully colourful English translation of the original German text.

CP/M is greatly enhanced. To begin with the larger TPA means that you can use full size versions of programs like *Wordstar*, and be able to move blocks of text larger than a couple of lines. The RAM disk is a very useful tool indeed. For those with only one drive it is a godsend, but even those fortunate to have two drives will quickly appreciate the increase in speed. For the larger boards the capacity of this new C: drive far exceeds that of the standard Amstrad disks so it could be used to hold large documents or databases. But, never forget that the contents of this drive will vaporize if the electricity stops flowing. That lack of safety and the fact that a RAM disk can only be used as a staging post when copying from one disk to another are its two disadvantages. But, if you are both patient and disciplined you should derive a great deal of satisfaction from the chip disk.

BACK TO BASIC

Since the board is not designed to be removed again it follows that it should not interfere with the computers' other activities, such as running games software. I tested 15 different games and the only one which would not load was *Way of The exploding Fist*, the reason being that this particular game uses evry single byte of memory, right up to HIMEM, and part of the VORTEX firmware is sitting in the very top four bytes. My version did not provide any means of turning the Vortex ROM off other than opening the computer and disconecting the fly lead. I could instal a switch to break that connection but I understand that a new version of the ROM has already been sent out, with a new command **IBosout** which clears the Vortex ROM out of memory completely.

The command **IBOSS** takes you into the board's expanded BASIC. Once here you have a whole range of commands to manipulate data, screens and variables between the memory banks. For example it is legal to use the new **IGosub** to direct a program into a subroutine held in a different bank. **IList** can be used to list a program bank by bank while **ILoad** will load a program into a selected bank and **ISave** to get it out again.

Apart from being able to write programs which can operate across a number of different memory blocks the new BASIC also provides a means of manipulating the memory for data storage. **IRamopen** and **IRamfield** formats an areas of memory into records, rather like a database. **IRamread** and **IRam write** are used to read and write records into the reserved areas. Special commands have been built in to deal with the manipulation of screen blocks. **IScreen** commands can be used to section off an area of video and then load pictures out of memory onto the screen at great speed.

The BASIC also provides an expanded set of graphics commands, to bring the 464 up to the standard of the 664 and 6128. These include **IFast** which doubles the speed of screen output; **IFrame**, forces synchronisation between the CRT and the data being sent to it; **IMask** defines a mask for graphic output of lines and points.

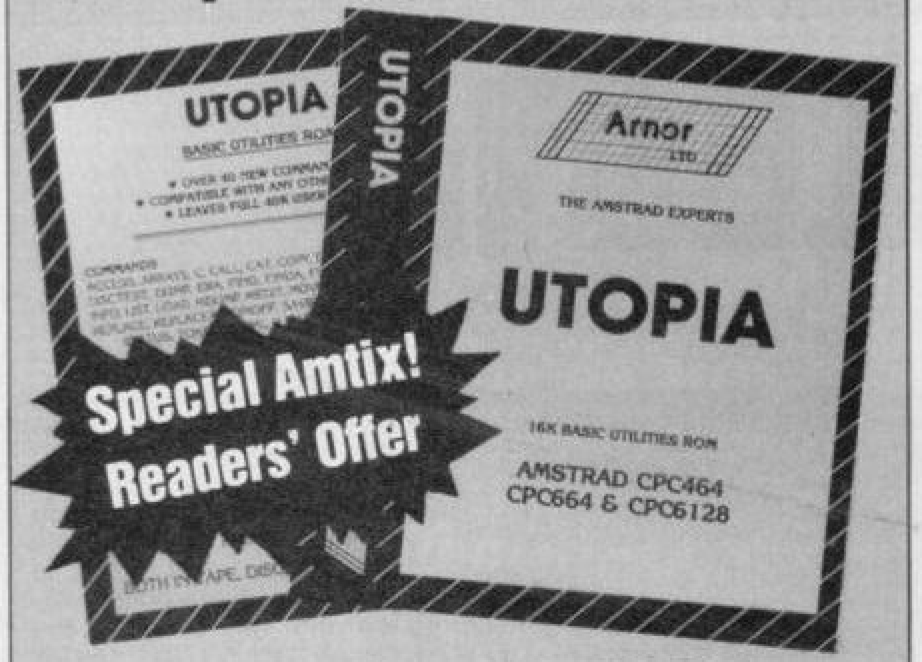
Although the RAM disk cannot be used from basic the print spooler can, though I confess to having problems with the like of Protext. **ISpool.on** turns on a 32K print buffer ready to grab your output and deal it out to the printer while you continue with your console work.

Finally, the board comes complete with its own Z80 monitor designed to interact with the rest of the software to give the

REFERENCE TABLE FOR VORTEX BOARD

MODEL	SP64	SP128	SP256	SP320	SP512
Price	£99.95	£119.95	£139.95	£149.95	£159.95
RAM disk	none	64k	129k	256k	448k
CP/M area	60k	60k	60k	60k	60k
Data area	Shared	with	basic	area	256k
Basic area	64k	96k	160k	192k	288k

Beef up Straddles with UTOPIA



Those nice men who brought us **PROTEXT** have made their latest product available exclusively to the readers of AMTIX!

What is **UTOPIA**? Well it's a state with perfect political and social conditions and — a basic toolkit ROM. The ROM contains a library of useful sub-routines which can be invoked directly with a single external command. Most of the routines are designed to be used from BASIC and make a programmer's life a lot easier. Imagine the convenience of getting a graphics or text screen dump without having to load a program in, just a simple bar command. Besides the commands to help you write your own programs the ROM also has a large number of file commands so you don't have to keep loading in your system disk to perform such mundane operations as FORMAT. Powerful commands enable the user to juggle around bits of memory with ease.

Apart from having your own **UTOPIA** the only other thing you need is a way of plugging it into your Amstrad. No problem. The price includes the Arnor single ROM board which can be located discreetly inside your computer without you even having to take a screwdriver to the thing. Although the ROM is compatible with the 464, 664 and 6128 the board is not, so please let Auntie Aggie in mail order know what type of Straddles you live with. Apart from that the only other requirement is that you should part with a bit of cash (well a cheque or postal order would be better). All we ask is a mere £42.50 and that includes the normal nasties such as VAT, postage and packing.

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machine code programmer some real power. The monitor is able to assemble and dissassemble code as well as tracing, single- stepping, displaying and altering single memory locations. The monitor can be called up at any time, even while another program is running, and be exited to put you back exactly where you started from.

CONCLUSION

While the DK'Tronics expansion was designed to be compatible with existing software, this one was not. It makes absolutely no attempt at all to emulate a 6128 which means that the commercial programs like Tasword 6128 and Masterfile 6128 will not work.

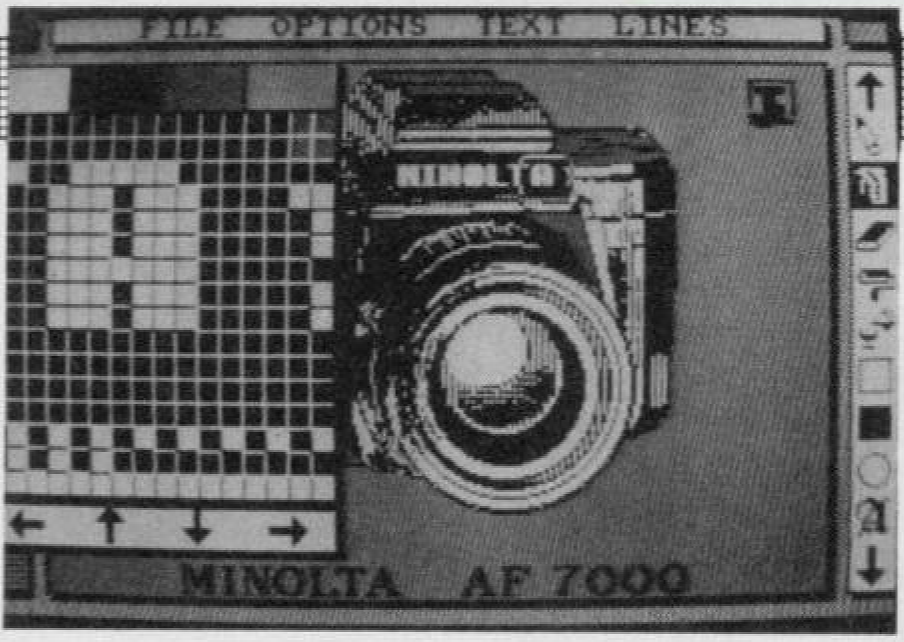
I was slightly disappointed the system could not support CP/M plus, just how many 464 owners will share my disappointment remains to be seen. However, the Vortex 'CP/M has a few minor improvements of its own and there's no doubt in my mind that the RAM disk and printer spooler are very valuable tools. I suspect that most people will initially find the enhanced CP/M the most rewarding, before they begin to benefit from the board's other facilities. This is simply because the CP/M facilities are the most noticeable and the easiest to use. Having said that you must be prepared to reconfigure any existing CP/M programs that you have if you want them to take advantage of the larger TPA, not an easy task.

Since there are no commercial programs able to take advantage of the new BASIC, none CP/M activities are going to be limited. I am told that a number of software houses are now in possession of one of these boards and they are either converting existing software or writing new applications. When these new products reach the market the versatility of the board will know few boundaries. The Germans are apparently putting the finishing touches to a graphics ROM designed to interface directly with the board, the possibilities are mindblowing.

In reality what we have here is a new computer. One which is fully compatible with the 464 but which has power to spare — a 464 Plus. Like any new computer the success or failure of the 464 Plus depends on the software support it gets. Screens are dedicated to encouraging the development of software but there's much to be done if we are to take advantage of the board's undoubted power.

Extended Basic commands

IBank	Select one of the 32k banks
IBasic	Return from **IBos**
IBos	Turn on new Basic
ICall	Call machine code routine, specify bank and address
ICommon	allows variables to be common across specified banks
IDev	Assign output channel for **IList**
IFast	Increases video output speed by factor of two
IFrame	Synchronise data output to CRT
IGchar	Read character from x,y position
IGosub	Call subroutine in specified bank
IGoto	Jump to specified line in specified bank
IGpaper	Assigns a background colour
IGpen	Assigns a foreground colour
IList	List program bank by bank
ILoad	To load a program larger than one bank
IMask	Define a mask for graphics output
IMon	Calls resident monitor
INew	Clears selected banks
IPeek	Peek at specified bank address
IPoke	Poke to specified bank address
IRamclose	Close data file opened with **IRamopen**
IRamfield	Format data area into records
IRamopen	Define area of RAM for Data
IRamread	Read specified record from RAM
IRamwrite	Write specified record to RAM
IRecords	Calculates the number of records available from reserved area
IReturn	Return from a **IGosub**
IRun	Runs a program written under **IBos**
ISave	Save program greater than one bank
IScreen.in	Load 16k picture from video RAM
IScreen.out	Store picture to video RAM
IScreens	Calculates number of available video RAM banks
ISlow	Cancels **IFast**
ISpool.on	Turns on 32k printer buffer
ISpool.off	Turns off buffer
IUnmask	Remove graphics mask
IVideo.on	Divides RAM into video area
IVideo.off	Returns video area to normal



THE MOUSETRAP II

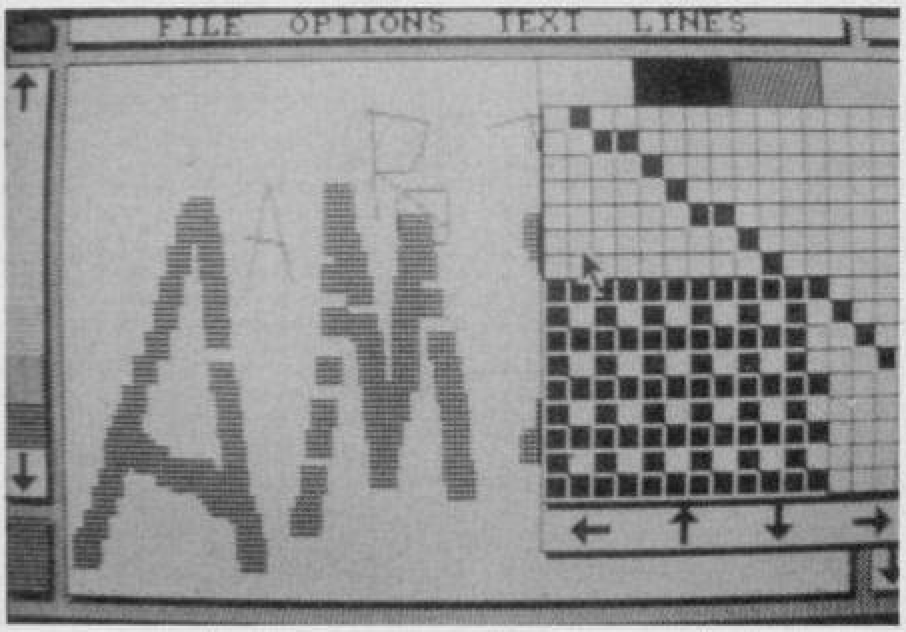
In the December issue of Amtech, the AMTIX! technical wizzo, FRANCO FREY, gave the AMX MOUSE a long and strenuous workout. Since then AMX have considerably altered the creature's software, in particular the main section, AMX ART.

Most significantly the mouse now does its thing in full technicolour. In order to manipulate the variety of available colours several new options have had to be included into the software. The pull down **Options** menu now includes a **Paint** option. As soon as **Paint** is selected a palette of coloured patterns, or hatches is displayed on the left. The hatches are made up from four different inks, two of which can be altered. However, if you have set ink 2 to be red and later change it to green the areas of red in the drawing area will change accordingly. In effect this means you can have four colours only. The two variable inks can also be called from the lines menu and then used for lines, text or as a coloured paint.

A second important change is the inclusion of a **zoom** facility. When the cursor pulls down the options menu and placed on **zoom** a small box appears over the drawing. A zoom window with a 14 X 14 pixel grid will appear, duplicating the area under the small box. As the box is moved so the zoom window moves to avoid obscuring the picture area being examined. Pressing execute forces the cursor into the zoom window so it can be used to point to individual pixels. The zoom window can be scrolled, in any direction, pixel by pixel, from within the window. using the cursor and the three mouse buttons the colour of individual pixels can be altered.

The earlier software did not provide any means of cataloguing the files on a disk, and it was all too easy to forget the name of a picture or pattern file. The file menu now has a **Directory** option. The whole package has been made easier to use by a much improved manual, which is considerably more imformative than the earlier version.

Product: AMX Mouse
Manufacturer: Advanced Memory Systems
Price: £69.95
The upgrade service is free.All you have to do is return the original disk or cassette.



LETTERTECH

Before we have any more phone calls I will apologise for the none appearance of the CP/M section last month. Simply, Roy had written his share, and a bit more. When art came to stick everything down they found that they just couldn't fit the entire piece in. These things happen. Roy is back this month with more news and reviews of the freebie CP/M software.

If you read through the news about the Amstrad user show you should get excited with the number of potential goodies that are due to appear. In hardware terms the Amstrad must, by now, be better served than most. In this issue we take a look at the new expansion board for the 464 from Germany, and if you think that ones sounds clever just wait till next month and read about the board for the 6128. Progress is being made on the software front as well with packages like the *Animator* and *Music Processor* so there will be plenty to keep you, and us, busy for the next twelve months. But, in the interests of all who buy these new products Amtech would like to hear of your problems, dissapointments and ideas of improvement. If you have any comments or suggestions then don't hesitate to get in touch so we can all benefit.

In the meantime here are this month's selection of problems — keep sending them in.

FAT JOYCE

Dear AMTECH
Could you tell me whether upgrading the RAM disc (or should it be disk), on an Amstrad 8256 is merely a matter of plugging in some 256K bit chips, of 159ns or faster, into the empty sockets inside the computer; or is it, as I suspect, slightly more complicated than that?

I am sure there are many other 8256 owners who would be very interested to know the answer.

P.S. Since your magazine caters for Amstrad computer users, would it be possible to gave a special section for those of us who use or own an 8256.
Edmund Ward, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands

It is, as you suspect, slightly more complicated than that. The extra sockets are there because Amstrad originally intended to use 8K chips when the Joyce was designed. But, by the time the machine came into being made the cost of the 16k chips had fallen to such a degree that they were used instead, the result being a few empty holes. While it is a fairly simple operation there are a number of ancillary operations which need to be performed if the computer is going to recognise the new memory.

As yet I am not sure exactly how the job is done but I am finding out and hope to tell all next month. In the meantime Newstar software produce an upgrade kit so you could try them. There is one small point. Delving into the innards of your Joyce will not do much for it's guarantee, so you should bear that in mind.

I don't think it would be reasonable to set aside a special Joyce section just yet but since the 8256 outnumbers our 6128's by a ratio of two to one we will certainly be dealing with 8256 specific software when the need arises.

LONGER LEAD TO FAINTER PICTURES?

Dear Amtech
I have just seen an advertisement for Monitor Extension Cables priced at £6.05. I have two questions to ask about this item and I hope you may be able to answer them.

If I purchased extension cables would this affect graphics quality?

The company selling this particular extension is Lightshade, but do you know of any other firms that may be selling this item cheaper?
D Plows, Mildenhall, Suffolk

Providing the cable isn't too long (a couple of feet should be fine) there shouldn't be any noticeable loss of signal. I must admit that I don't know of anyone else selling such a cable and, in truth, I haven't even bothered to look simply because if I wanted an extension cable I would make one. Simply pop out to one of the high street electrical shops and ask for one 6 pin DIN socket, one 6 pin DIN plug and a length of flex with 5 wires. After that you can join the two together simply by making sure each pin on the socket is joined to the corresponding pin on the plug. I can't promise you are going to save a great deal of money, perhaps just two or three pounds — but you'll have a lot more fun.

LETTERTECH

AMSTRAD/SCHNEIDER
CP/M PLUS

FROM TAPE TO DISK

Dear Amtix!
Could you please tell me if there are any programs available for transferring games on tape to disc. I am sick of waiting for big games to load in to the computer from cassette when there is a perfectly good disc drive on the 6128.

Also, are there any Level 9 adventures compatible with the 6128? 7*Snowball* and *Colossal Adventure* certainly aren't!
Stephen Barber.

There are a number of tape to disk programs. We reviewed two of them in issue 1, and you will find at least two advertisers selling such utilities within the pages of this issue.

The level 9 adventures certainly can be made to run on a 6128 and here's how . . .

```
ITape
Memory &ZFFF
Load "", &3000
```

As soon as the program has loaded type in call &3000
That should work for all of the early Level 9 adventures; *Colossal Adventure, Snowball, Adventure Quest, Dungeon Adventure* **and** *Lords of Time.*

UNFRIENDLY CASSETTES

Dear Amtech
I am an anguished Arnold 6128 owner who has in desperation been forced to set fingers to keyboard and wing you a letter. I ask you, on bended knee, and in my desperation, 'what kind of cassette recorder do you use with your 6128 or 664?'. I tried using an 'el cheepo' job with a WH Smith logo, which always used to handle even the most contorted Spectrum hyperloads, but just can't handle my Arnold. I am using proper cassette leads and it is definitely not a volume or tone problem. I've even checked the head alignment but to no avail.
B Bruce

This is very strange. We ONLY use 'el cheepo' cassettes and find they work very well. It isn't going to help you, but we use a number of different machines: Triumph, Matsui and Hitachi. I don't think it's fair to blame your cassette especially since it has provided such sterling service with a Spectrum. May I suggest that your best move would be to make sure that you lead is perfect and then, if possible take your cassette along to Dixons — a helpful bunch — and charm the man into letting you try your cassette with one of their Amstrads. Of course if your tape deck doesn't work with one of the shop's machines you can be as rude to it as you like.

WHO IS LUDLINSKI?

Dear Amtech
I have an Amstrad 6128 complete with disk drive and wish to purchase a Maths 'O' level disk for it. I believe Ludlinski Computer Assisted Learning do one but I have no idea of their address or of the cost of the disk. Can you help?
P Pisani, Aldershot, Hants

At first I thought you were messing us about. I mean I ask you — LUDLInski. However, after a quick chat with our educational man I was told they are better known as LCL. They confirmed they have just released two maths packages; one to take you up to 'O' level maths called *Micromaths*, and another for 'A' level standard called *Megamaths*. Both packages cost £24 each and come with two books and two tapes or one disk. If you want to get in touch with them then try 0784 58771.

COMMS FROM A HOSPITAL BED

Dear Amtech,
I am referring to the WS2000 modem (£129.95) and RS232 serial interface (£49.95) in the December issue of Amtech. Please could you tell me where I can buy them and any other information which I might need to know if I was to use them for communications.
Babu Koya, Middlesborough General Hospital.

You shouldn't have too much trouble getting your paws on a WS2000, it's made by Miracle Technology and they can be reached on 0473 216141. That particular modem offers a very broad range of communication protocols allowing the user to talk to just about any computer going. There are two stand alone interfaces available. The first is from Amstrad themselves so you had better phone them at Brentwood to inquire about that. Honeysoft do their own interface and software which together cost a little more than the Amstrad interface, but is generally reckoned to be the best performer. You can contact Honeysoft on 0872 573440. You had better get in touch with them soon because they are due to move back to Brentwood and I don't know their new number! I hope you get better soon!

BAK TO CASSETTES

Dear Amtech
I have recently taken the plunge and purchased my first micro, ɜ 6128. Like many others I can neither find nor afford vast numbers of disks and therefore I want to use cassettes for long term storage.

Unfortunately I cannot persuade the machine to copy from disk to tape, although chapter 1, page 77, of the manual clearly implies this can be done.

Can you provide an idiot guide?
C Russell

The answers are all in there somewhere but it will take a lot of work to dig them out. Essentially there are two solutions to your problem. Amsdos will allow you to re-direct any data to the tape interface rather than the disk, with the instruction Itape. The problem with this is that it isn't going to be much use if you are using a program like Tasword 6128, unless you know the areas of memory where the text or data is located. By far the simplest trick would be to use a disk as normal and then at the end of the day transfer the data onto tapes under CP/M. If you dig out the CP/M 2.2 system disk and boot it up you will notice that there are two .COM files, one called CLOAD the other called CSAVE. One will load a cassette a cassette ASCII file onto disk while the other will save files out onto tape. Naturally this will mean your having to keep one or both of those COM files on your data disk but that shouldn't be too much of a problem.

If you look at chapter 5 page 13 of your manual it tells you how to move different file types around — it's not very explicit but that's where the fun begins.

MAKE A NEWSAGENT HAPPY

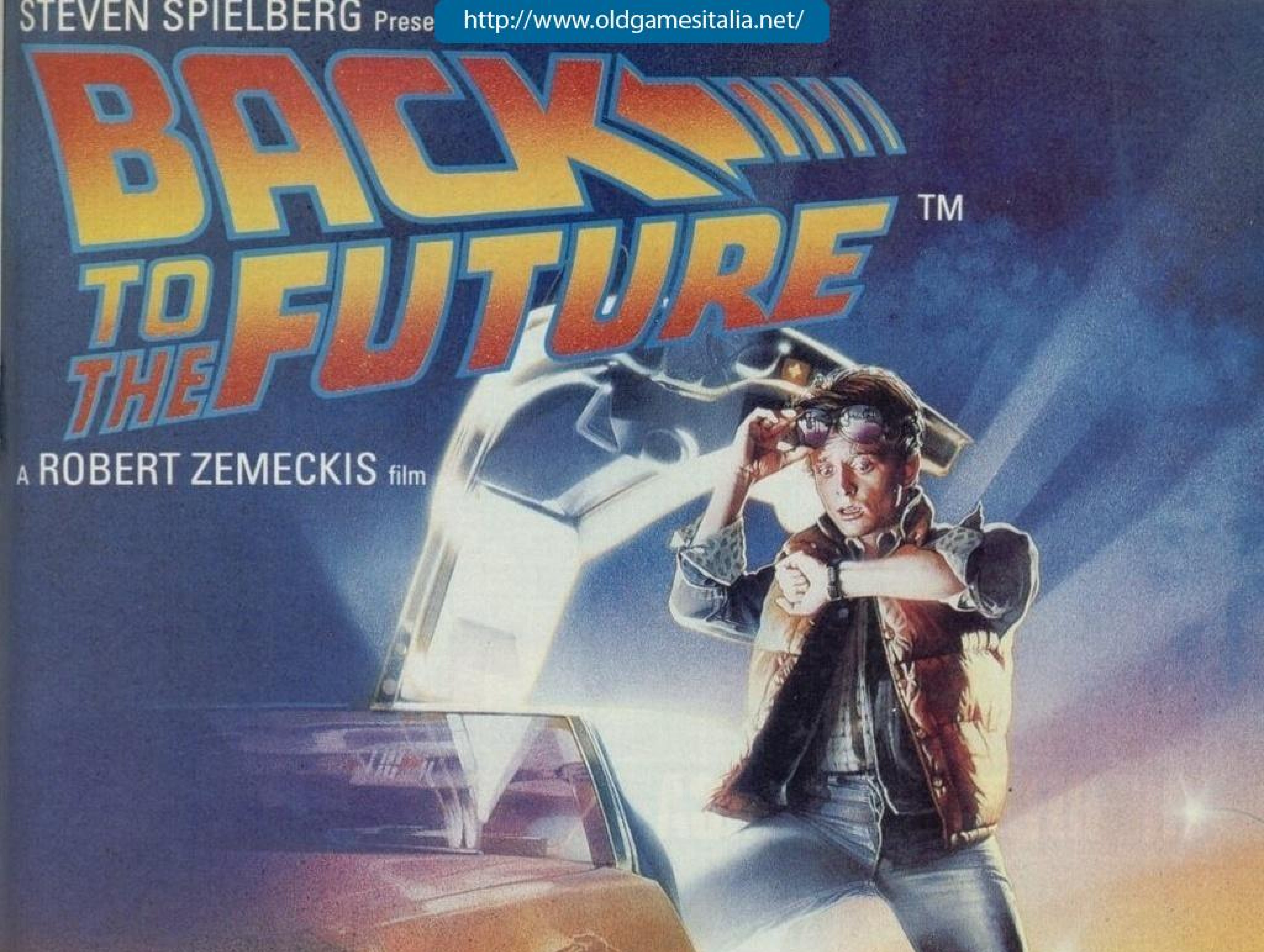
Dear Amtix,
I am both a newsagent and owner of a 8256 and would like the latter to help me with my life as the former. Are there any CP/M programs available to perform all mundane little tasks that newsagents have to cope with. I have seen a very clever program running on a Wren but I can't remember the name or even the supplier. Can you help?

I am also having a little trouble finding a database for the Joyce. I know there are quite a few about but they are quite expensive and since I only really want the thing to play with I don't think it would be worth paying a lot of money.
Mr Walker, Bournemouth.

I have phoned around and managed to trace three newsagent programs. The sad news is none of the three software houses actually produce an Amstrad version, or even seem interested. The cheapest package retailed at £200 but it did seem to do all sorts of wonderful things. What you need is a firm who will do the conversion for you. With that in mind I got in touch with Newstar. They told me they intend to market such a package, converted for the Amstrad machines. At the moment they are still trying to decide on the best packages. It would seem your best course of action would be to get in touch with Newstar on 0277 220573 and make sure that they keep you in the picture.

A low cost database shouldn't present too much of a problem. Sage PLC have just released one for £69.95, Newstar sell Cambase for £49.95 and the old trusty Amstrad genius from Cambelsoft is rumoured to be constructing something along the lines of DBASE II. You could try pestering John Campbell on 01 508 5058 and find out what his intentions are. If you only want a database to 'play' with perhaps you might have a go a writing one in Mallard Basic which provides no end of powerful features designed for just such a task.

That's it for another month.If you have any hints or tips to pass on to our readers, or indeed any technical problems write to us at: LETTERTECH, AMTIX!, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.


STEVEN SPIELBERG Prese
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SO

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Breathtaking Graphics

You're an athlete at the 1988 Winter Games at Calgary, Alberta, Canada. You're about to move across snow and ice with as much speed, strength, endurance and grace as you can muster in the blustery cold.

This is the winter portion of the world's foremost amateur sports competition. You'll match your skills against the top athletes from a hundred countries.

Be proud. Today you stand among the elite few whose courage and stamina will be tested by these Winter Games. Thousands of white doves symbolically fly to the countries of the world with the message of peace - and the news that the Winter Games have begun. This is it - your chance to go for the Gold!

BEACH-HEAD II

Gripping Arcade Action

Beach-Head II features all your favourite characters in the continuing saga of the battle for Kuhn-Lin.

Enter the Dictator, known as "The Dragon", an evil, bloodthirsty, power crazed maniac. A brilliant military tactician, he has been trapped and outnumbered many times in battle but managed to turn the tables on his opponents through sheer cunning and ruthlessness.

Pitched against the Dragon is Allied Commander J. P. Stryker. A courageous fighter, he quickly rose through the ranks during World War II; and is widely respected for his integrity and leadership abilities.

BRUCE LEE

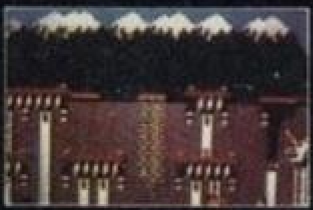
Twenty secret chambers to explore

Unique multiple player options

Dazzling graphics and animation

In "Bruce Lee" you will experience the power and the glory of Bruce Lee, one of the greatest masters of the martial arts.

As Bruce Lee, you will confront a barrage of vicious foes. You must penetrate the fortress of the Evil Wizard and claim his fortunes. Destroying the Wizard will earn you immortality and infinite wealth!



THE BEST OF AMERICA..

U.S. GOLD ON THE AMSTRAD*-ON

THE GOONIES

Thought Provoking Multiscreen Action

Intricate Rube Goldberg style images provide the challenge in exciting screens inspired by the Steven Spielberg movie. Deadly bats, demonic flying skulls, and poisonous slime are just a few of the perils to avoid while figuring out how to co-ordinate the movements of the characters to solve the puzzles and outwit their adversaries.

It is impossible to get through any screen without creatively using both the characters featured in that screen. It's up to you to help the Goonies elude the evil Fratelli Gang and save their homes from foreclosure.

DAMBUSTERS

Superb Graphics and Sound

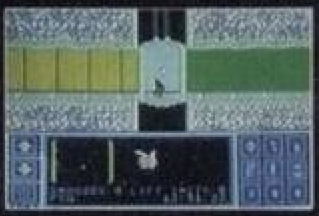
At 21.15 hours on the evening of May 16th 1943, a flight of specially prepared Lancaster bombers left R.A.F. Scampton for Germany. And so, one of the most daring and courageous raids of the Second World War was underway. Now you have the opportunity to relive the drama and excitement of this famous action via your Amstrad computer. You will take the parts of Pilot, Navigator, Front and Rear Gunners, Bomb Aimer and Flight Engineer as you play this authentic reconstruction of the night's events. The multiple screen action is complemented by a comprehensive package of flight documents and authentic material from the period.

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

Game of the Year 1985- British Micro Awards

Message from the Agency computer..... "....Your mission, Agent 4125 is to foil a horrible plot. From an underground laboratory, Elvin, the scientist, is holding the world hostage under threat of nuclear annihilation. You must penetrate his stronghold, avoid his human-seeking robots and find pieces of the security code.

Somersault over the robots or use a precious snooze code to deactivate them long enough to search each room. Use the Agency's computer to unscramble the passwords from the code pieces, or try to solve them yourself. You'd better beware.....This mission is stamped IMPOSSIBLE!"



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GREAT GAME AFTER ANOTHER !

"Al

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ROBIN OF THE WOOD

SALES 051-709-4462

MANY ARE THE SUBSTITUTES

A few weeks ago I met a rival of mine in the guise of ZZAP! 64's White Wizard. Whilst chatting, he gave me a phone number with the cryptic command to ring it on the following Thursday. This I duly did and found myself in a voice operated computer game. Called *The Train Game*, it consisted of a recorded voice that gave out a series of instructions for play and then asked me to repeat certain words for a voice test.

Some narration would follow, ending with a question and a tone to prompt my response. This could be any of the single syllable words issued at the beginning of the game. After a short pause, the narration would continue on the basis of my last response. The plot involves a murderer at work on the London tube system. The idea is that you travel on the tube until you confront him and bring him to justice. The game was actually very small as it was only a test for future projects but in my case the game lasted about fifteen minutes for I successfully completed it.

The system was only on line for a week but it opens up many opportunities for future adventuring. The computer adventure game will be available to those who don't even possess a home computer. Before long, multiple word entries will be feasable and the adventurer will have a whole new world to explore.

Be seeing you.

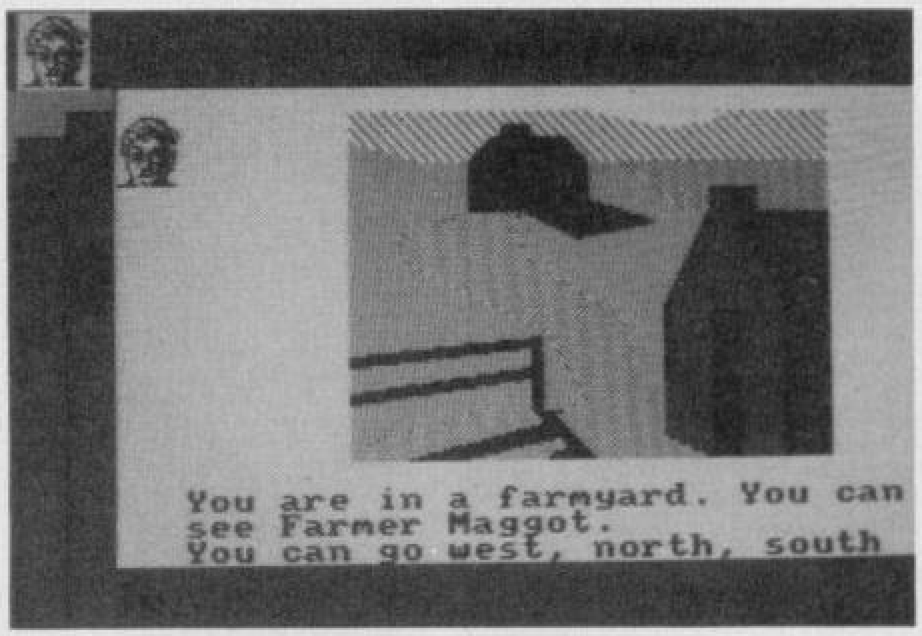
LORD OF THE RINGS

Melbourne House, £14.95 cass

It has been long in the making but finally, after no mean amount of pre-launch hype, the final version has appeared on the shelves — and at the Newsfield offices. The package is certainly mouth watering. A two cassette game and a copy of the first part of the legendary Tolkien trilogy itself, *Fellowship of the Ring*, which you could probably read from cover to cover while the game is loading. Aside from that, a fat video case and fifteen pound price tag make the product complete.

When the game starts the option to play one of three characters is available. Frodo, Sam and Pippin are all potential player characters. Those not chosen end up as companions. The starting location is Frodo's burrow, cosily situated in the Shire. A good examination of the surroundings makes supplies present themselves to you. All that needs to be done then is take the road to Rivendell to meet Gandalf.

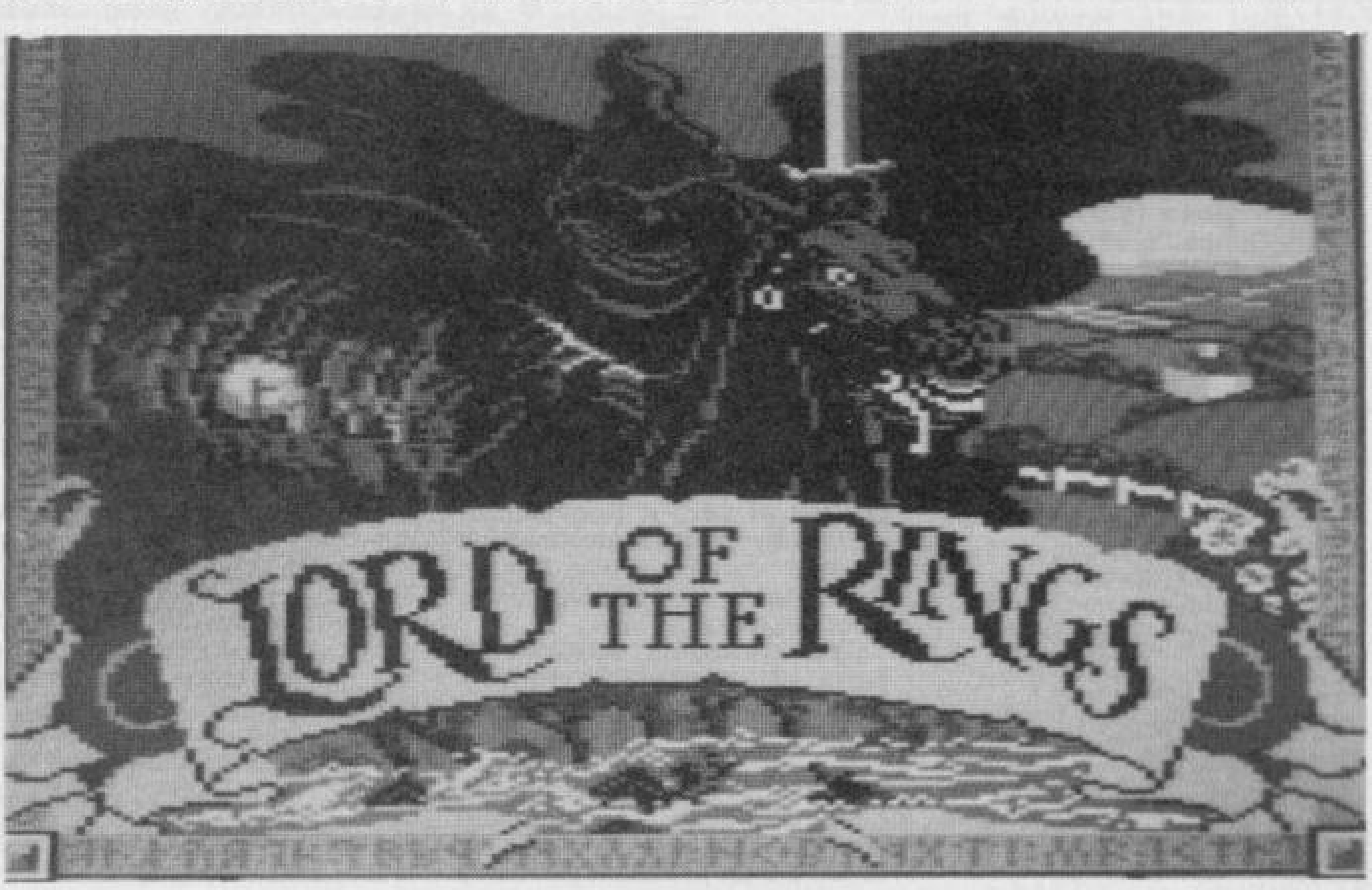
Of course, it all sounds far easier than it actually is. The black riders are out and about and no one can be trusted. Of course there are many other hazards, as those who have read the book will be well aware. Remembering that this double cassette game is only one third of the intended package, it becomes apparent that much of the detail from the original novel should survive the translation to a game easily.



You are in a farmyard. You can see Farmer Maggot.
You can go west, north, south

Interaction is via the keyboard, as you would expect from this type of game. From then on you are plunged into the fantasy world of Melbourne House's Inglish. Inglish is their very own interpreter and the company are proud of it. When *The Hobbit* was released, there wasn't much to match it. Capable of handling limited multiple command input, its only flaw lay in a series of bugs that sometimes led to confusing answers. The (presumably) updated version used in this game is sadly lacking. When simultaneously presented with several objects, I typed the relatively simple command GET ALL only to be told that there was no alcohol in this area! Some attempts at communication with other characters led to replies consisting of nothing more than garbage. Response is slow and this soon becomes annoying.

Apart from this annoyance, your companions have a lot to answer for when it comes to time wasting. They are very slow indeed. The computer never ceases to remind you that these other characters are present. This is a redundant process to say the least as there is a graphic display on the left of the screen which displays the



▶

same information just as well. The only result of this duplicity is even more delays in an already slow system.

There are good points. Occasional graphics areas add to the narrative text. These are fashioned in Level 9 style impressionism and work fairly well.

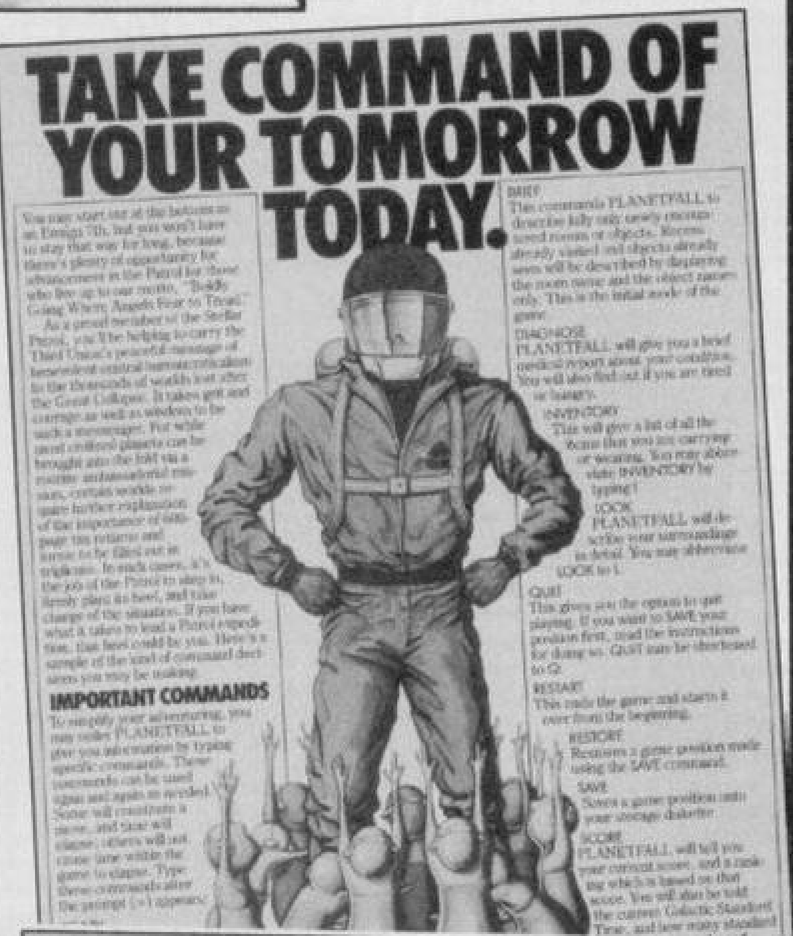
Amstrad CPC
Amstrad
FIRST PART OF
ORD OF THE RINGS
THE
ELLOWSHIP
F THE RING
.R.R.TOLKIEN
OF THE RINGS

Unfortunately, the rest of the screen maintains a slightly cluttered look whether they are there or not. The graphics display on the left is useful for at a glance information but seems only partially finished off in the way it runs over into the text section.

Initially, the game is fairly simple to play. There are no really tricky puzzles beyond looking past your nose and there are few dangers a novice could not deal with. However the further into the game a player gets, the more sinister and treacherous play becomes. This is perhaps an underrated feature of the game. It works in a similar fashion to the book. At first the venture seems to be little more than a Sunday outing but before long matters of life and death abound.

Whatever I or anyone else says about it, *Lord of the Rings* is going to be a hit. Tolkien is still a highly marketable name. Unfortunately I don't think this is justified. The game is pretty good but is still badly flawed in the areas of playability and interaction for a 'mega game.' It deserves some attention but ultimately fails to compare with classics like *The Worm in Paradise.*

Atmosphere 83%
Plot 81%
Interaction 74%
Value for money 72%
Overall 72%



TAKE COMMAND OF YOUR TOMORROW TODAY.

IMPORTANT COMMANDS

BRIEF

DIAGNOSE

INVENTORY

LOOK

QUIT

RESTART

RESTORE

SAVE

SCORE

AN ENDLESS DREAM

Last month, Gary Penn and I reviewed the first three Infocom releases on the Amstrad (see *For Minds Forever Voyaging* AMTIX! 4). The limitations of time and available space meant that the last two reviews had to wait until now. For those of you who missed last month's superlative piece (well, false modesty would be dishonesty), a short explanation is in order. The two reviews that follow carry no ratings. The reason is simple. The quality of Infocom adventures is incredibly high. To rate them would be to make them somehow comparable to other adventure games — which they are not. Should the quality of future Infocom releases fall, then they shall be rated. Until then, consider them all to be AMTIX! Accolades. Read on . . .

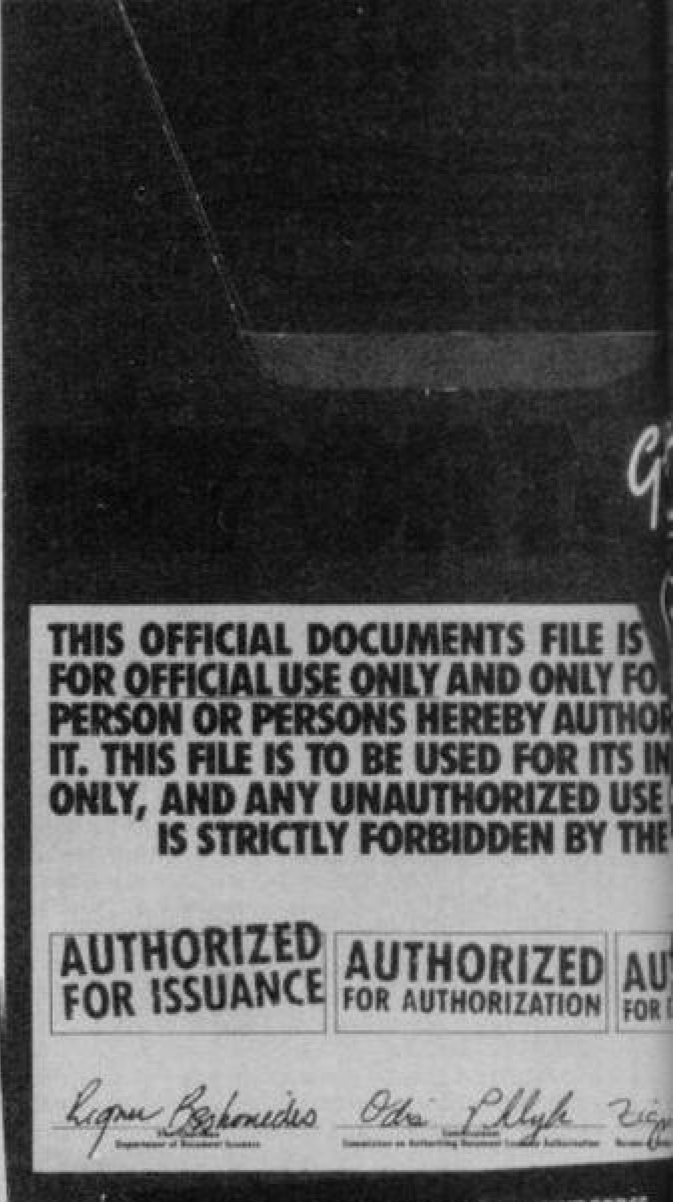
PLANETFALL

Infocom, (Softsel), £19.95, disk

'Join the Patrol and see the Galaxy!' Taking the poster's advice, you had signed up straight away. At that moment you were commisioned as Ensign 7th Class Code KP:8, licensed to swab. And that's about as near to heroism as you ever got on your interstellar travels. The chances of being left to fend for yourself on a distant world with the chance to save it from almost certain doom are several million to one against. Only natural then, that this be the plot for an Infocom game.

The packaging contains all sorts of entertaining material including a brochure for the Stellar Patrol, some diary notes, post cards from *very* weird resorts and, of course, the game disk. The goodies contained within the package are superb. A brochure for the Stellar Patrol is superbly designed to promote the image of jingoistic spacefarers, 'Boldly going where Angels fear to tread.' The importance of explaining the necessity of filling out 600 page tax returns in triplicate to backward worlds is emphasised with just the right level of pretentiousness. The notes from your diary make the basis for the lead up to the game. After being victimised by a malicious commanding officer, you have to make the break and abandon ship. From that moment on, you're on your own . . .

One of the first things a player will notice about this game is the clock. Time only passes when the program responds to an input from the player. However, this is Galactic Standard Time. The basic unit of time is now the millichron. One thousand millichrons make up one chron and ten chrons correspond to our own twenty four hour clock. The other thing that becomes almost immediately noticable is the beaurocracy. Galactic civilisation is built around a cross between an Orwellian nightmare and the more subtley disturbing overtones of *Brazil*. Nothing is simple to achieve. A variety of identity cards and codes are often needed for the most inconsequential of actions.



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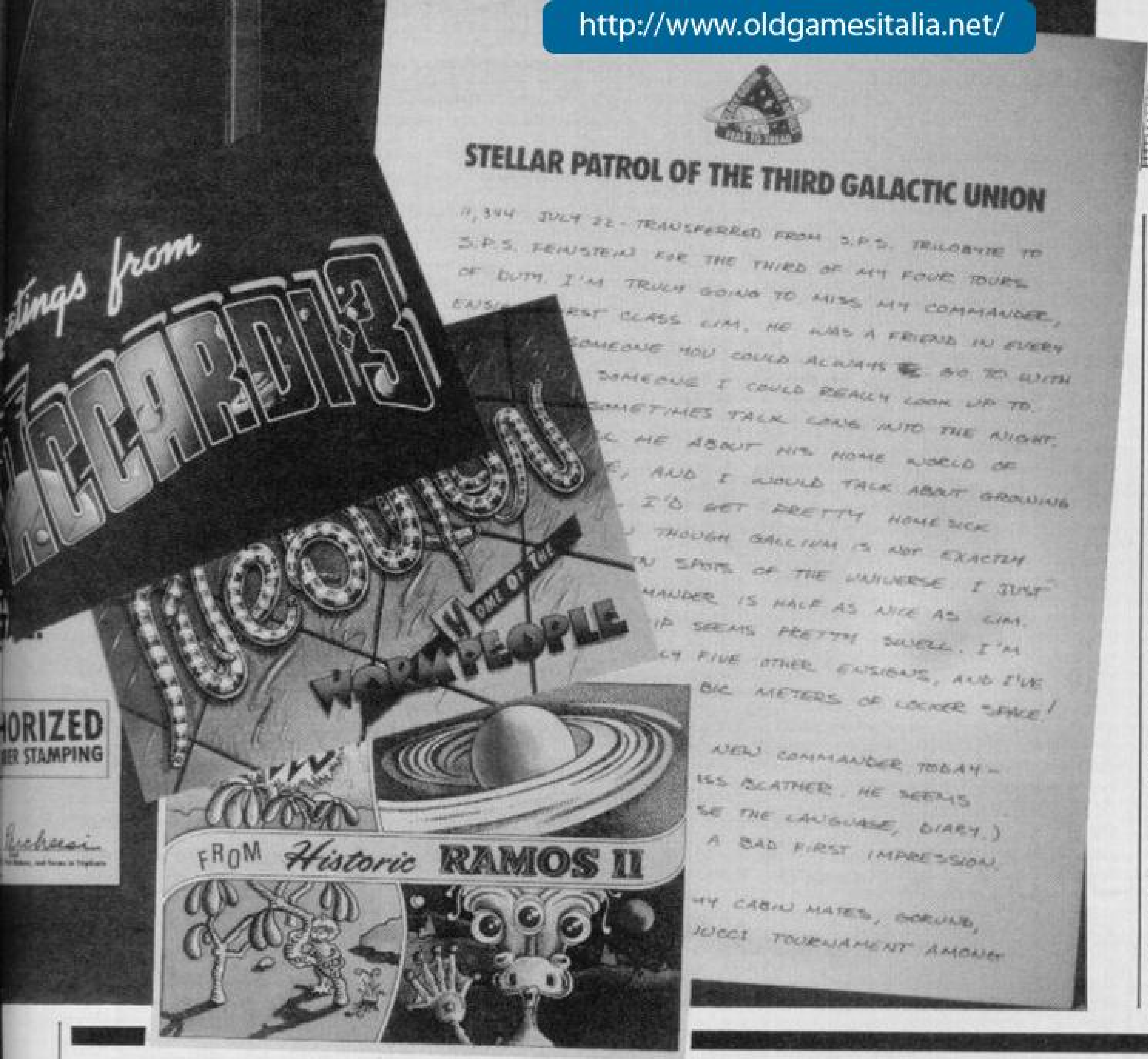
AU FOR

STELLAR PATROL: SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT FORCE
But even your expert technical training won't save you now.
PLANETFALL

Of course it's all designed to be most frustrating and succeeds admirably in this respect. Only Meretzky's sharp wit and poignant humour make you want to continue through the malaise of almost impossible odds. The game actually becomes quite tense towards the end but beware. It's all too easy to make a crucial mistake early on in the game and find yourself up the creek without a paddle later on.

Input is standard Infocom fare; that is to say it's years ahead of any other system. The result of the confidence gained using such a system is that the player is not afraid to try something different that would be impossible to achieve in a more simply crafted adventure and possibly succeed. So the game is a joy to play in that respect.



STELLAR PATROL OF THE THIRD GALACTIC UNION

11,344 JULY 22 - TRANSFERRED FROM S.P.S. TRILOBYTE TO
S.P.S. FEINSTEIN FOR THE THIRD OF MY FOUR TOURS
OF DUTY. I'M TRULY GOING TO MISS MY COMMANDER,
ENS[illegible]RST CLASS LIM. HE WAS A FRIEND IN EVERY
SOMEONE YOU COULD ALWAYS GO TO WITH
SOMEONE I COULD REALLY LOOK UP TO.
SOMETIMES TALK LONG INTO THE NIGHT.
L ME ABOUT HIS HOME WORLD OF
E, AND I WOULD TALK ABOUT GROWING
. I'D GET PRETTY HOMESICK
THOUGH GALLIUM IS NOT EXACTLY
N SPOTS OF THE UNIVERSE. I JUST
MANDER IS HALF AS NICE AS LIM.
IP SEEMS PRETTY SWELL. I'M
LY FIVE OTHER ENSIGNS, AND I'VE
BIC METERS OF LOCKER SPACE!

NEW COMMANDER TODAY -
ISS BLATHER. HE SEEMS
SE THE LANGUAGE, DIARY.)
A BAD FIRST IMPRESSION.

MY CABIN MATES, GORUND,
JUCCI TOURNAMENT AMONG

There are moments of obvious inspiration from Douglas Adams' books. The necessity to find and use a towel correctly is just one of these. The thing is, they are all worked into the game in such a clever way that even the plagiaristic elements of humour work in an original and refreshing manner. Although most of the obvious inspiration is Adams oriented, *Planetfall* bears a closer resemblance to Bob Shaw's excellent SF comedy *Who Goes Here* than anything else.

Planetfall is rated as standard level which means it's supposed to be very hard indeed. This is the case but not for quite the reasons you might expect. In some Infocom games of this complexity, puzzles are normally difficult in that plenty of lateral thinking is required to solve them. Some lateral thinking will help you in this game but most of the problems are complex because there is simply so much to do in each case. It's quite difficult to explain without giving the plot away but if you can imagine having to run around like a headless chicken whilst trying to save an entire world, *Planetfall* is the game for you.

SPEND THE NEW YEAR IN THE 25th CENTURY AND TAKE A TRIP TO PARADISE

THE WORM IN PARADISE

Level 9 have spent 12 months enhancing their adventure system with world-beating features for the coming years and **THE WORM IN PARADISE** is the first game to use this new system.

"The Austin 4 haven't just produced, in **THE WORM IN PARADISE**, a new title — they've created a whole new ball game in adventure technology ... The latest title offers a 1000-word vocabulary, the most sophisticated parser ever incorporated in a cassette-based adventure, and the refinement of multitasking ... You'd have to spend an evening with a Roget's Thesaurus to come up with enough superlatives to do justice to **THE WORM IN PARADISE**; it not only offers stunning (albeit at times disturbing) originality in the overworked realm of science fiction but also embodies state-of-the-art programming techniques which will allow you effortlessly to give reign to your powers of creative deduction"
— Commodore User

"An excellent adventure, atmospheric, devious and full of the ingredients that have established Level 9 as probably the best English adventure writing house to-date." — Computer Trade Weekly

"I will describe this game in 3 words: Sheer unadulterated brilliance. Rarely have I played such a wonderful, enthralling adventure ... The puzzles are entertaining, tough and logical. The storyline is immaculate, in its originality, concept, and application. This game incorporates Level 9's new parser which has to be used to be believed. Complex, and multiple input commands are understood, and the game is extremely user-friendly. In short, mortgage your computer, and get a copy. Immediately!"
— The Adventurers Club Dossier

An AMTIX ACCOLADE. "The game is very good in terms of interaction ... fascinatingly original and clever. OVERALL 91%
— Amtix

"probably the company's best adventure so far" — Microscope

"YOUR SINCLAIR MEGAGAME 9/10"
— Your Sinclair

"The final big difference over previous games is the size of the vocabulary. You can LOOK, of course, but you can also LISTEN and even SMELL ... Level 9 claim that the program will understand over 1000 words ... about five times as much as most other present-day cassette adventures. ... out of this world" AA Rating 87%
— Amstrad Action

THE WORM IN PARADISE is available on 6 micros. All versions with the exception of the BBC have more than 200 pictures.

(Our list of games for other micros — ENTERPRISE, LYNX, MEMOTECH, NASCOM, ORIC1 is available on request — please send SAE.)

☐ Please send me a **FREE FULL COLOUR POSTER** with more details of Level 9 adventures on the back. I enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope about 9" by 6".*

☐ Please send me **THE WORM IN PARADISE** on cassette for the

AMSTRAD 464/664/6128 ☐ **ATARI 64K** ☐ **BBC 32K** ☐ **COMMODORE 64** ☐ **MSX 64K** ☐ **SPECTRUM 48K** ☐

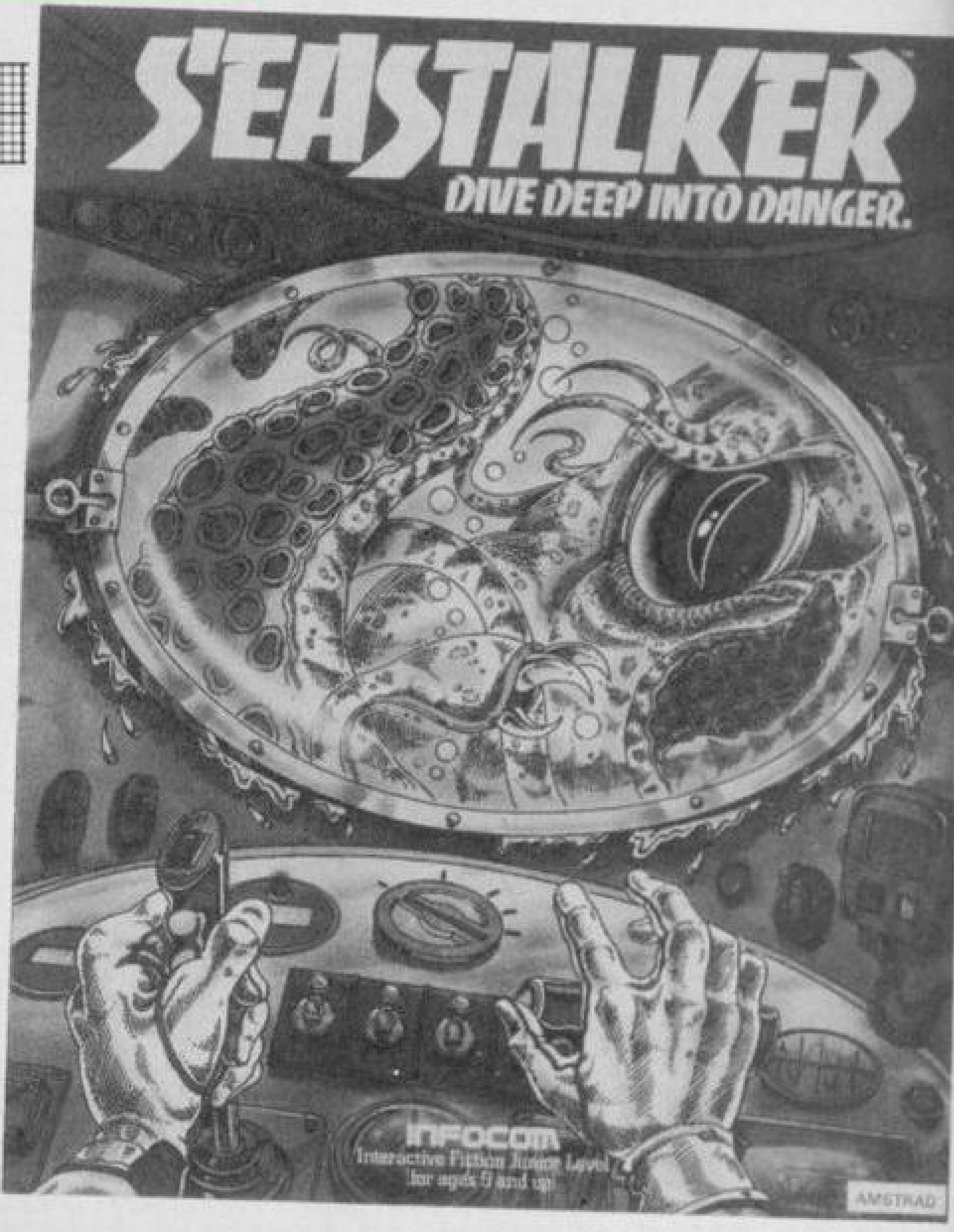
I enclose a cheque or postal order for £9.95.*

My Name is ______________________ My Address is ______________________

** Adventurers outside the UK should send a Eurocheque or bankers draft for £10.95 for the game, or an international reply coupon for the poster.*

Level 9 Computing, P.O. Box 39, Weston-super-Mare, Avon BS24 9UR

SEASTALKER


SEASTALKER
DIVE DEEP INTO DANGER.
INFOCOM
Interactive Fiction Junior Level
for ages 9 and up
AMSTRAD

Infocom (Softsel), £19.95, disk

Seastalker is Infocom's first introductory adventure aimed at children from nine years old upwards. Consequently the puzzles and mysteries in the adventure are far less demanding to the average player than their more complex counterparts. Packaging is likely to make even the most hardened of gamers (like Julian Rignall) want to take a closer look. The large format slip case contains a nautical chart of Frobton Bay (the starting point of the adventure), a log book with game instructions, room for log entries and some blueprints, some Infocards (coded hint cards) and a sticker.

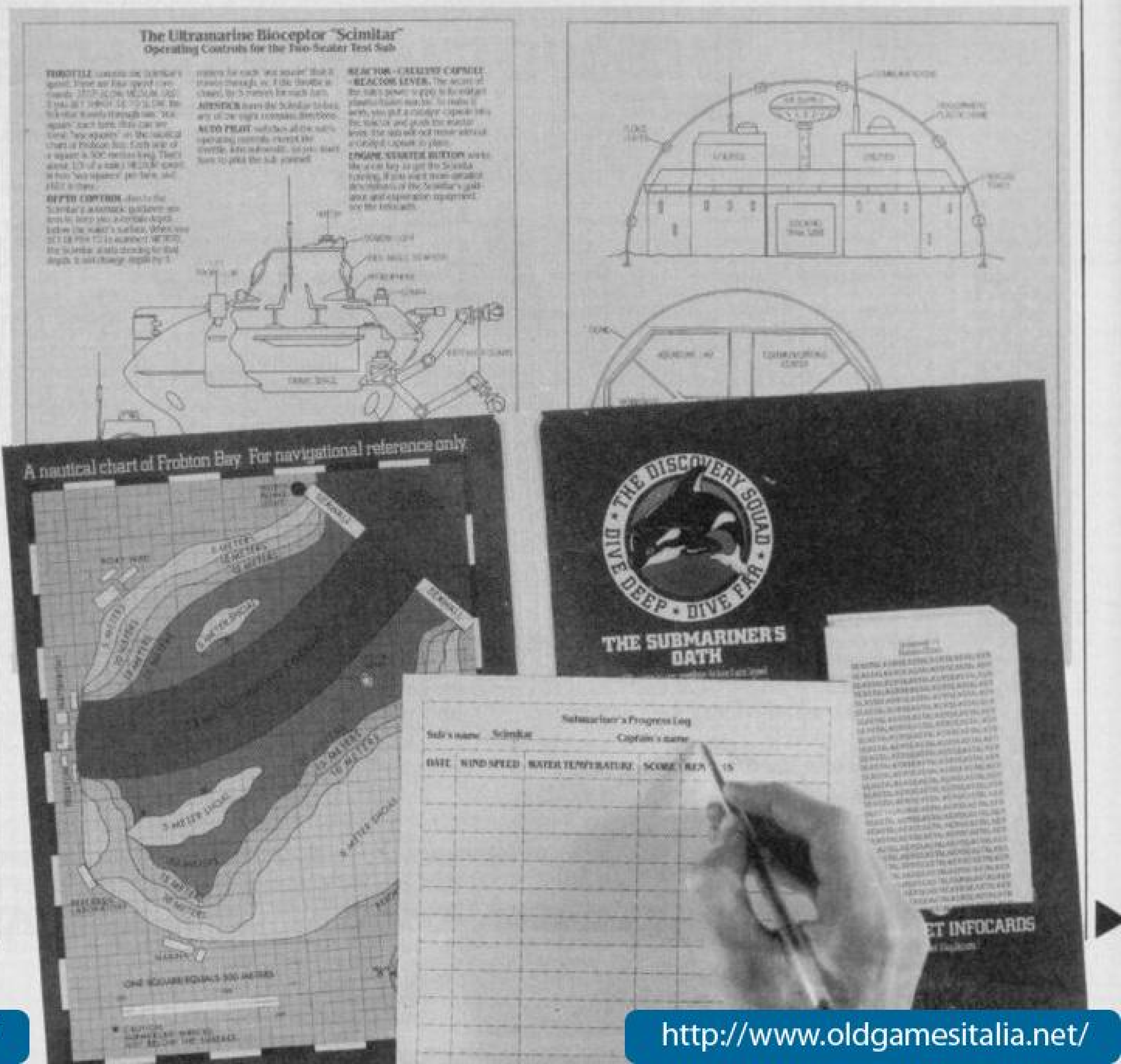
All the instructions are aimed unmistakably at the young adventurer (right down to a letter from the President at the start of the log book). It all makes you wish you were ten again so you could enjoy it without being embarrassed about being seen playing it. The instructions make everything clear to begin with. Your character is in the offices of Inventions Unlimited where the submarine **Scimitar** is berthed. The submarine has yet to be taken on a test dive but an emergency has arisen at the Aquadome several kilometres off shore. The **Scimitar** is the only vessel near enough to reach it in time (such is the stuff of Saturday Matinees — now where did they go?). There are beasties and shipwrecks to be encountered on the way and there may even be a traitor at the Aquadome . . .

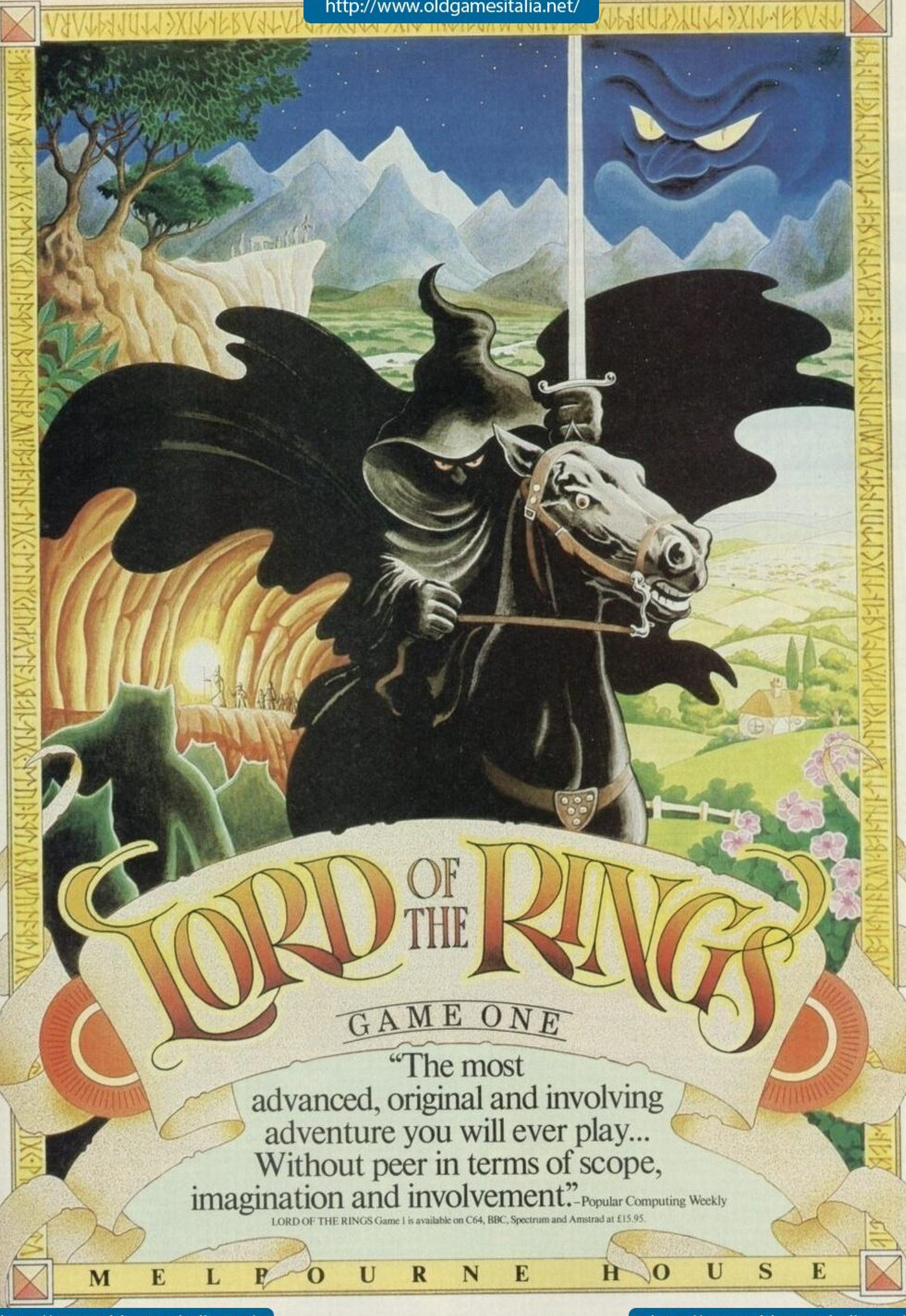
The game has the full compliment of Infologic commands. Evidently the company don't let their standards slip by patronising the younger end of the market. But all the usual details about interacting with the game are presented in refreshingly atmospheric fashion. The sub itself is fitted with a whole host of easy to operate sensing equipment allowing the examination of almost every phenomenon discovered.

Normally, if you're stuck on an Infocom game, it's necessary to shell out several pounds for an Invisiclues book to help you on your way (actually these books usually do more than just offer hints but they are still quite expensive) but in *Seastalker* there is a collection of hint cards. The answers (or clues) to various problems are printed in faint ink and overprinted with the name of the game, making them impossible to see accidentally. Run the card through the red plastic window in the sleeve however and the heavy printing disappears leaving a clearly typed piece of information behind. Simple but effective. Enough of these cards are supplied to satisfy the most impatient of novice adventurers.

Although this is designed as a 'junior' adventure game, it will keep a more experienced adventurer busy for a few hours. The trouble is, some of the dialogue seems out of place. Most of the dialogue and plot is rather corny but this is in character and doesn't make you cringe so much. But some descriptions and messages seem to be in a style which doesn't quite fit the 'comic book' approach of the game and yet neither does it reach the high standard of Infocom's more complex efforts.

There is no denying the technical excellence in making an adventure game fast paced enough to make it exciting for the young but thoughtful player, however. Throughout there is a terrific atmosphere (you can almost taste the salt). Really though, older or more experienced players probably won't get much satisfaction out of the game apart from simple fun and from having the game as part of a collection. The newcomers to adventure gaming, perhaps not so used to logic puzzles and mysteries rather than alien-zapping, will almost certainly thoroughly enjoy the yarn. Comparing *Seastalker* to *The Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy* would be rather like comparing *Star Wars* to *2001*. Both are excellent in their own right but the latter has far more depth (pardon the pun). Anyway, I like the sticker . . .


The Ultramarine Bioceptor "Scimitar"
Operating Controls for the Two-Seater Test Sub
A nautical chart of Frobton Bay For navigational reference only
ONE SQUARE EQUALS 500 METERS
THE DISCOVERY SQUAD
DIVE DEEP • DIVE FAR
THE SUBMARINER'S OATH
Submariner's Progress Log
Sub's name Scimitar
Captain's name
DATE
WIND SPEED
WATER TEMPERATURE
SCORE
INFOCARDS



"The most advanced, original and involving adventure you will ever play... Without peer in terms of scope, imagination and involvement."–Popular Computing Weekly

LORD OF THE RINGS Game 1 is available on C64, BBC, Spectrum and Amstrad at £15.95.

MELBOURNE HOUSE

CLOSET FROTHERS COME OUT — AND WIN A COPY OF A GREAT ADVENTURE GAMES BOOK . . .

Here's something for you to ponder — when I used to work for a company that shall remain nameless, myself and my colleagues had one terrible fear — being caught by the Frothers. It's not as painful as all that — well, not physically anyway! Frothers are a type of person (just). They are a strange breed of characters who have become totally enslaved by adventure and role playing games until their lives revolve around a computer or set of dice.

They would wander up to you and waffle (or 'froth') endlessly about their game of D&D the night before. Great pains would be taken to explain their pseudo medieval political and monetary structuring system devised over a cup of luke warm tea (Frothers love tea). Or worse still, they would explain every detail of the entire Zork trilogy (pausing for dramatic effect over the exciting bits) the minute you mentioned Infocom. By the time they left, you would be little more than a gibbering wreck murmuring something about probability curves and shoving Babel fish in your ear. Frothers were a fate worse than death.

To give them their due, they did know a lot of useless facts about their hobby. So in the spirit of those deadly, but well meaning wierdos (rather like Hare Krishna freaks), I've concocted a six-question cocktail consisting of the kind of trivial junk usually uttered by a Frother's orifice (which invariably has a mind of it's own). Apart from helping you identify a Frother when it opens its mouth, if you answer the questions correctly (and tell me the answers 'cos I'm dying to know) you can win one of six copies of A J Bradbury's *Adventure Games for the Amstrad* donated by the author himself. Consider it a 'Mini-Comp'. Good luck.

1. The very first computer adventure game (sometimes referred to as *Colossal Adventure*) was originally written on a DEC PDP-10. Can you name the two authors?

2. Which author inspired Level 9's *Red Moon*?

3. From which programming language is Infocom's Infologic system derived?

4. Which adventure game has a helping Condor when you're stuck?

5. What is Adventure International's Brian Howarth famous for?

6. In which arcade adventure game will you encounter Magma Ltd in the course of your furtive activities?

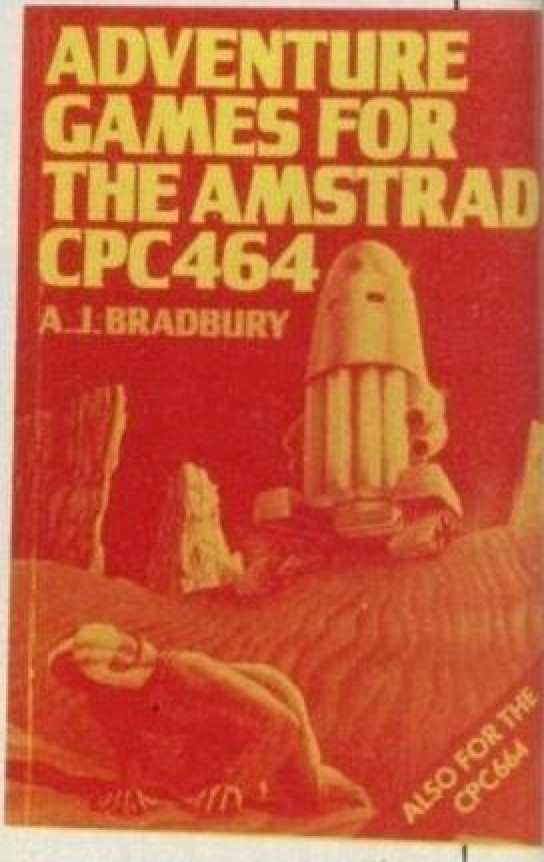
There you have it — or not, as Barry Norman might say. You have until March 20th to put your mind into gear. Put your answers on a postcard (or the back of an envelope) and send the entries to:

AMTIX ADVENTURER COMPETITION
P O BOX 10
LUDLOW
SHROPSHIRE
SY8 1DB

P.S. Warning — Frothers can often be identified by the Pink Tie Syndrome. An amazing piece of evolution in action where fabrics worn by the Frother develop their own intelligence and reconstitute as a parasite in the form of a pink tie which desperately tries to cut off the blood supply to the brain before it's too late.

WRITING ADVENTURE GAMES ON THE AMSTRAD CPC 464

A J Bradbury,
£7.95 Collins



A J Bradbury is by no means the first to venture into the field of guides to writing adventure games on a home computer. Other more established authors have explored the Amstrad range of micros in particular. So it was with a certain sense of 'deja vu' that I began reading this book. I am no programmer but the book is designed to teach you how to write complex, efficient adventure games in BASIC which isn't too far beyond my ability to understand. As a result I found myself working through the chapters rather rapidly without losing track of the author's instructions.

The book begins simply enough with a somewhat cliched dialogue lifted from a hypothetical adventure. From there it improves rapidly as the author explores the usefulness of various BASIC commands in the context of game design. The explanations are clear and readable (suitable to grace the pages of the usually semi cryptic instruction books all too frequently packaged with a micro).

Bradbury never makes assumptions. Various philosophies of game design are dealt with in a logical process that leads to decisions about implementation that are then executed in an ongoing program as it develops through the book. The result is a coherent progression of the design procedure that anyone with an iota of intelligence would be able to follow. It also lends shape and direction to the book enabling those already capable of more advanced programming to maintain interest.

Very little space is given over to 'filler' material. However one area where that does fall into the trap of extraneous explanation is when Bradbury deals with the task of preparing and mapping an adventure game. True, a great deal of care should go into this integral part of the process but the number of examples of good and bad methods soon became little more than a long winded way of stating the obvious. Other than this temporary lapse however, it is only fair to point out the high standard of textual quality.

Eventually, Bradbury gets to grips with the subjects that often foil novices — data compaction and multiple command parsing. Considering the limitations of a high level language such as BASIC, very good methods are found to deal with both of these areas effectively. The results, following Bradbury's instructions are suprisingly detailed, fast and rewarding adventure frameworks leaving the imagination up to you. There are still those who believe adventures can be written in BASIC and be marketed as such. I doubt whether this is now a commercially viable proposition, but even so, the idea of enthusiasts creating their own adventures is entertaining and potentially educational.

Also included in the text are chapters on sound effects and the use of user defined graphics to add aesthetic touches to the finished program. Of course, these sections are presented as 'take it or leave it' options but the ideas expressed in the chapters are interesting and up to the standard in the rest of the book. The other clever feature is the outline of a tongue in cheek adventure game to write yourself, based on what you've learned from the rest of the book.

At 232 pages, this medium format book offers a full course and should teach even those with experience a thing or two. By and large, however, this book is aimed at the aspiring beginner. Given the going rate for any kind of computer literature, it does warrant the eight pound price tag but it's one more entry in an already crowded market. It will never go down in history but deserves success nonetheless.

AMTIX ARCANA

Every month from now on, AMTIX! adventurers will have their own hints section in the AMTIX! ARCANA. So if you have any maps, hints, problems, criticisms of my reviews, or are just willing to offer help to those in need, then let me know. The tips offered this month are mine, but I can't cover every game so your help will be appreciated.

Every magazine that runs a help page for adventurers uses a code to avoid giving away more help than is necessary and a similar procedure will be used here. It doesn't need to be complex so a simple reversal code will be used as follows:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
becomes
ZYXWVUTSRQPONMLKJIHGFEDCBA

Simple? Good — off we go then!

FAERIE

To enter the Underworld, you need the following items: YLLGH, HDVZGVI, ORG OZNK, PMRUV (RG RH RM GSV IFXP HZXP) but do not take HZMW IRMT, DZGVI TOZHH, YOZXP JFVVM.
If you have had any difficulty scoring points — ie any points at all, the reason is BLF SZEV GL XIVZGV Z HXLIV NLMHGVI. HZB GSV NZTRX DLIW RM GSV XZEV (CZREV).
And for a little extra, HVZIXS KLXPVGH to find a treasure.

THE HITCH HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

I think solutions to this one should be rationed. First off, something that few people are aware of initially:
UVVW Z XSVVHV HZMWDRXS GL GSV WLT LFGHRWV GSV KFY. It might not seem important but if you don't . . .
Here's a favourite — How to get the Babel fish:
KFG WIVHHRMT TLDM LM SLLP. KFG GLDVO LEVI TIRW. KFG HZGXSVO RM UILMG LU SZGXS. KFG QFMP NZRO LM HZGXSVO. KIVHH YFGGLM. For fun, try pressing the button after each stage of the process. More tips for this one next month.

ICE STATION ZERO

How to get rid of a (presumably) unwanted Yeti:
TL GL VHPRNL EROOZTV. TVG NZGXS ZMW KIRNFH HGLEV. ORTSG NZGXS. ORTSG KIRNFH HGLEV ZMW GSILD RG ZG BVGR.

While we're at it. We might as well get rid of the Polar bear as well:
IVGFIM GL SVORXLKGVI. URIV UOZIV (OLXZGVW RM SVORXLKGVI).

QUANN TULLA

To destroy the ship BLF MVVW GSV HGZGRX WRHIFKGLI ZMW GSV ORNKVGYLNY. XLNYRMV GSVN GL NZPV VNKOLWVI WRHX. GZPV GL VMTRMV ILLN (MVVW PVB). ZINH RGHVOU ZFGLNZGRXZOOB. Light blue touch paper and retire . . . (only kidding).

ZORK I

Following the review last month, here are some tips for those trapped in the realm of the Underground Empire. Right from the beginning then, to get into the house XORNY RM GSILFTS GSV DRMWLD. To get into the dungeons, NLEV GSV IFT.

And now for something slightly more complex. As you have probably discovered, The inhabitants of the Zork dungeons have a thief in their midst. He isn't easy to dispose of so be careful. RU BLF NVVG SRN VZIOB LM, ZELRW SRN (it's easier). DZRG FMGRO BLF SZEV Z SRTS HXLIV ZMW GSVM URTSG SRN DRGS GSV IFHGB WZTTVI. TLLW OFXP!

LETTERS

Dear Sean,
. . . I have only had my Amstrad three weeks and have only one adventure. It's called *Return to Eden* from a small company by the name of Level 9 — I would not be suprised if you hadn't heard of them. (*Sure! — SM*) This is the first Level 9 adventure I have tried and I need to ask for some tips (hangs head in shame). The pilot of Snowball is thruster happy. How do I disable him? I have got the spade in the mole hill (pathetic isn't it).
Tim Varley, Oxon.

I suggest you read the next letter . . . SM

Dear Sean,
I was reading your column about helping people out with adventure games. People who need help are welcome to contact me. I will be glad to help people month after month. The list of games I have solved is as follows:

1. *Return To Eden*
2. *Emerald Isle*
3. *Jewels of Babylon*
4. *Forest at World's End*
5. *Fantasia Diamond*
6. *The Hobbit*

J Lycett, 24 Willingdon Park Drive, Hampden Park, Eastbourne, E. Sussex BN22 OBS.

If you read the letter above, I think you'll find your first client. Meanwhile get in touch with me and let me know which game you want . . . SM

Art Supremo Oli Frey has drawn up the full map of *Zork I* for your delectation this issue. It should relieve you of one complex job at least. That maze is horrendous without a map. Don't think you need the artistic abilities of our man Frey to have your map published though. If you can draw — great. But if not, as long as the details are clearly laid out, we can deal with the aesthetics. The sender of the most interesting and useful hint, map or letter will win a cassette game of that person's choice. Now there's an incentive if you ever needed one . . .

Send your entries to:

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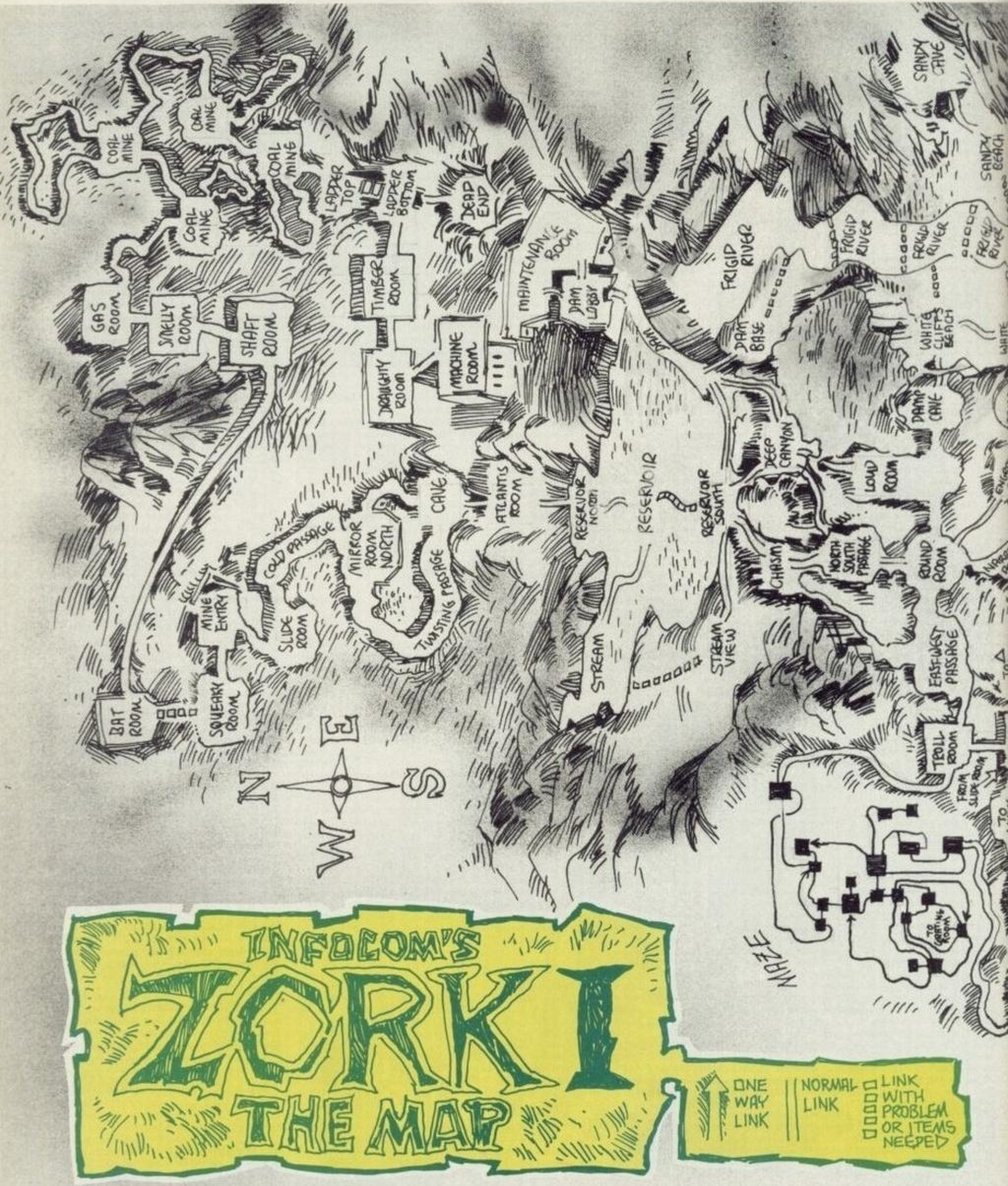
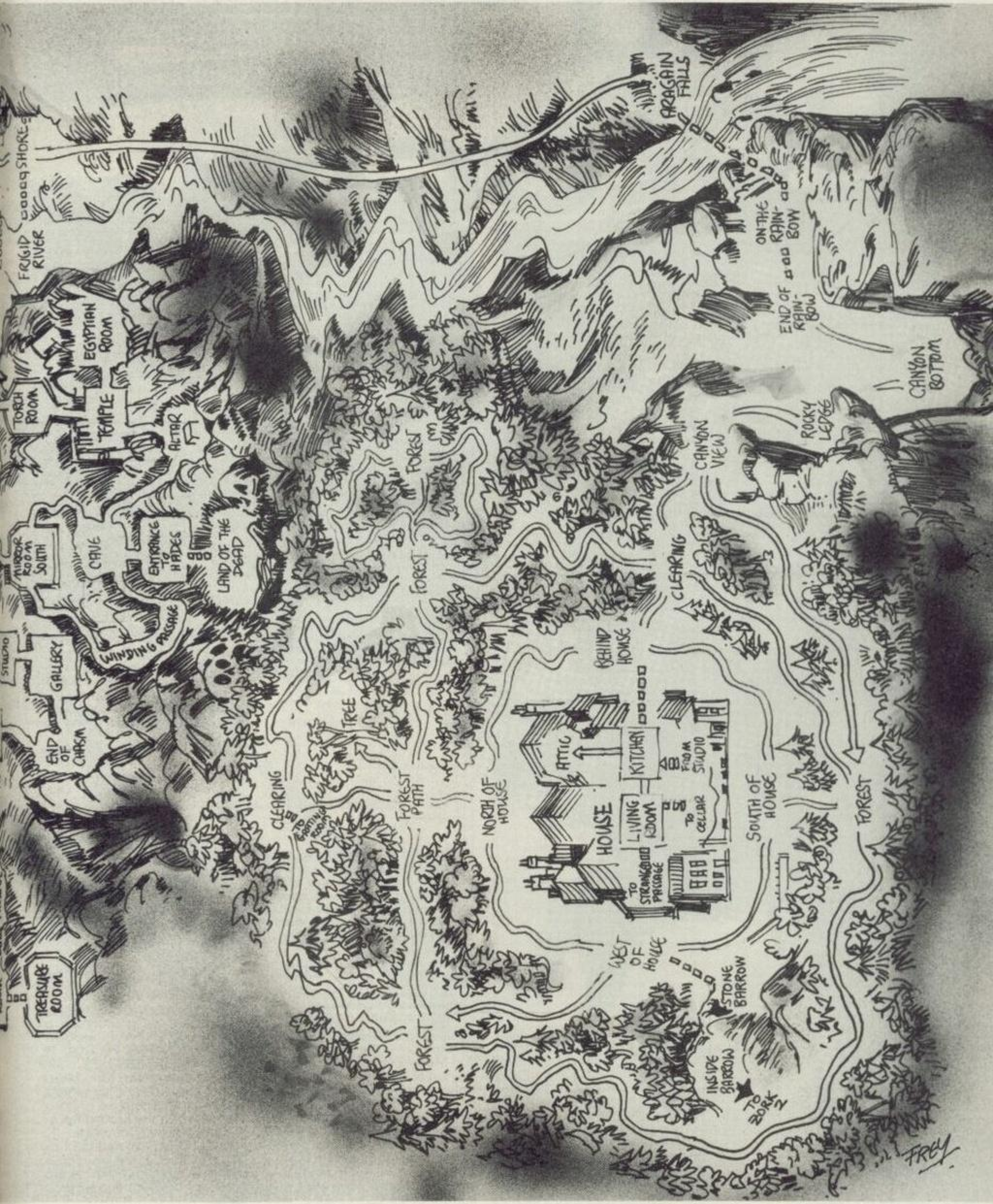

COAL MINE
COAL MINE
COAL MINE
COAL MINE
GAS ROOM
SMELLY ROOM
SHAFT ROOM
LADDER TOP
LADDER BOTTOM
DEAD END
TIMBER ROOM
DRAUGHTY ROOM
MACHINE ROOM
MAINTENANCE ROOM
DAM LOBBY
DAM
FRIGID RIVER
FRIGID RIVER
FRIGID RIVER
FRIGID RIVER
DAM BASE
SANDY CAVE
SANDY BEACH
WHITE CLIFFS BEACH
DAMP CAVE
DEEP CANYON
LOUD ROOM
ATLANTIS ROOM
RESERVOIR NORTH
RESERVOIR
RESERVOIR SOUTH
CAVE
MIRROR ROOM NORTH
COLD PASSAGE
TWISTING PASSAGE
SLIDE ROOM
MINE ENTRY
SQUEAKY ROOM
BAT ROOM
STREAM
STREAM VIEW
CHASM
NORTH SOUTH PASSAGE
ROUND ROOM
EAST-WEST PASSAGE
TROLL ROOM
FROM SLIDE ROOM
MAZE
TO GRATING ROOM
N
E
S
W
ONE WAY LINK
NORMAL LINK
LINK WITH PROBLEM OR ITEMS NEEDED

INFOCOM'S ZORK I THE MAP


TREASURE ROOM
END OF CHASM
STUDIO
GALLERY
WINDING PASSAGE
MIRROR ROOM SOUTH
CAVE
ENTRANCE TO HADES
LAND OF THE DEAD
TORCH ROOM
TEMPLE
ALTAR
EGYPTIAN ROOM
FRIGID RIVER
SHORE
ARAGAIN FALLS
ON THE RAIN-BOW
END OF RAIN-BOW
CANYON BOTTOM
ROCKY LEDGE
CANYON VIEW
FOREST
FOREST
CLEARING
CLEARING
BEHIND HOUSE
TREE
FOREST PATH
NORTH OF HOUSE
ATTIC
KITCHEN
FROM STUDIO
HOUSE
LIVING ROOM
TO CELLAR
TO STRANGE PASSAGE
SOUTH OF HOUSE
FOREST
WEST OF HOUSE
STONE BARROW
FOREST
INSIDE BARROW
TO ZORK 2
FREY

HO HO HOLOGRAM

Win your very own Hologram in the Lord of the Rings Comp
30 copies of the Adventure Game up for Grabs too!

AMTIX! COMPETITION

Hobbits and Competition Minions have a lot in common. We both like the quiet life — much preferring the confines of our nice warm burrows to frenzied activity out there in the great wide world. In my case, the burrow is the AMTIX! broom cupboard (which doesn't exactly boast hot and cold running water, but with a bit of effort a comfy nest can be made from bog rolls and dusters).

Melbourne House have brought the cast of characters who live in JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy onto the computer screen in part one of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy which should be available on the Amstrad any day now.

Visitors to the Melbourne House stand at the Personal Computer World Show last September can't have failed to notice the striking holograms they had on display. Made by Holografix — the firm founded by Mark Eyles and Caroline Hayton of Quicksilva fame — the holograms depict a Ring Wraith, or Nazgul. Now the Show is over, the nice lady at Melbourne House, Paula Byrne, is offering one of these holograms as top prize in this competition. Thirty runners up will also collect a copy of *Lord of the Rings*, the computer game.

Many happy hours of adventuring are guaranteed if you win one of these games — and one lucky adventurer will be able to get into the mood, playing the game while his or her very own Nazgul stares down from the wall.

What you got to do? Easy. Imagine you're a hobbit transported to the twentieth century (that's like, now. Today). Once you got over the initial bewilderment of motorways, juggernauts, television, space ships, telephones and the like, what would be the first thing you'd do? Would you ring Directory Enquiries to see if Gandalf was on the 'phone? Would you try and hitch a lift on Concorde? Maybe you'd get an Amstrad and start playing games with a vengeance.

Decide what your first priority as a modern hobbit would be and then draw the scene. Send your painting, drawing, etching, watercolour or photograph to **20th CENTURY HOBBIT, AMTIX! TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB** to arrive by 13th March which is the day of judgement. The most imaginative piece of artwork (with the bestest hobbit picture) will win its creator the Nazgul Hologram, and the next thirty in line, in the opinion of this this Minion, will collect copies of the Melbourne House game.

BACK NUMBERS!

Your chance to fill that gap in your life

AMTIX! is THE magazine for the discerning Amstrad owner, combining the best in games reviews and technical know how, coping with adventures and strategy, your problems and ours! You shouldn't miss out on this, but if you haven't been able to get hold of earlier issues of AMTIX! we do have some in stock — and after all, you wouldn't want any holes in your AMTIX! binder would you? So order now!

No 1 November 1985

● Complete Guide to games I ● Lightpens ● Dun Darach Map ● Pyjamarama Map ● Everyone's a Wally Map ● Lords of Midnight Map ● CP/M ● Tape to Disk Utilities

No 2 December 1985

● Complete Guide II ● Fighting Fantasy ● Alien 8 Map ● Word Processing with Tasman ● FORTH on the Amstrad

No 3 January 1986

● Gargoyle Games Profile ● Knight Lore Map ● Public Domain CP/M ● Computer Art ● Extension ROMs ● RS232

No 4 February 1986

● Dynamite Dan map ● The world of Infocom adventures ● Amsoft visit ● The first batch of results ● Gremlin graphics, the journey, the people and the story ● Introduction to seducational software ● Preview of the The Music Processor.

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Each back number of AMTIX! is available at £1.00 each (plus 20p for post and packing per item ordered). But why not take advantage of our special offer:

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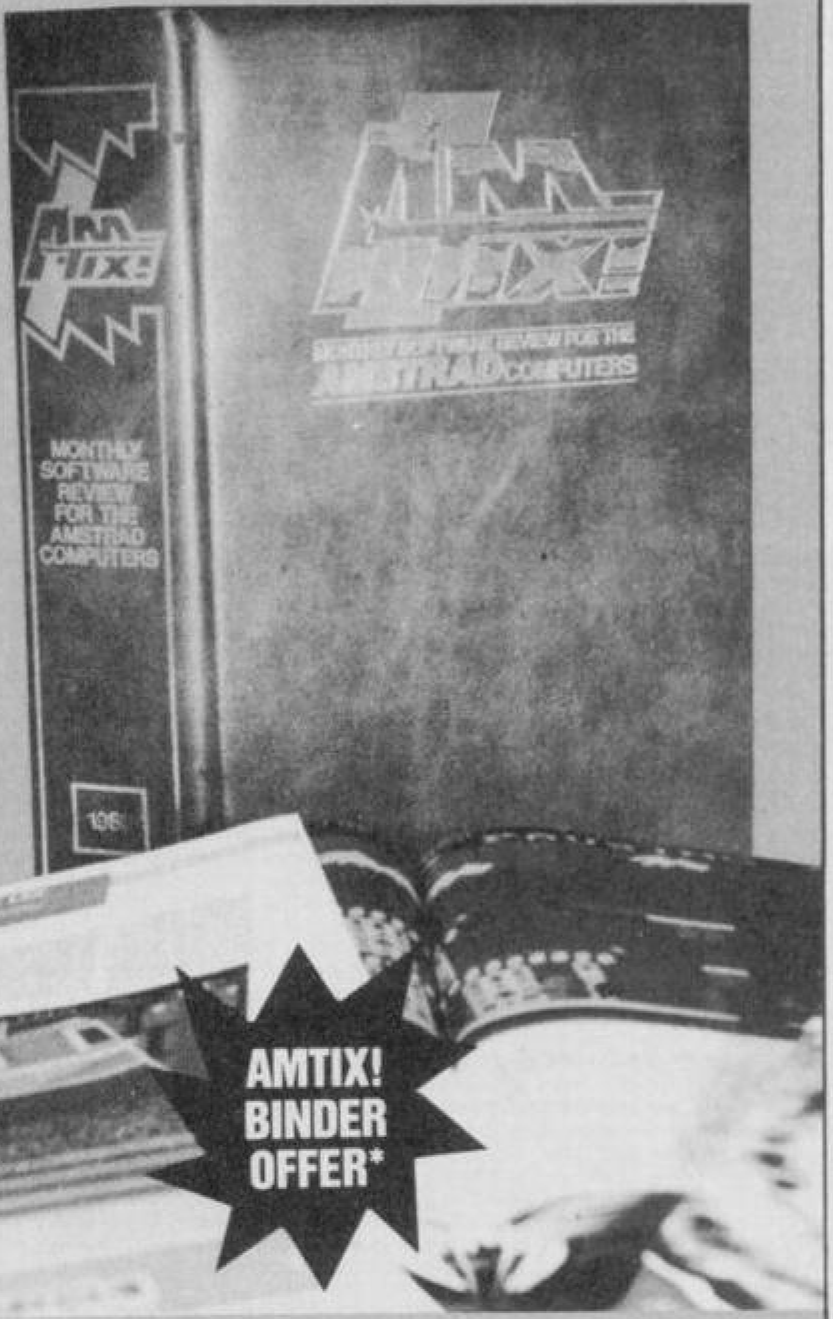
AMTIX! BINDERS

At last - they're here!

Yes, the **AMTIX! Magazine Binder** is yours for the paltry sum of **£4.50** inclusive.

Each binder takes twelve issues of AMTIX! held in place by small white plastic straps for ease of access. There's also a year sticker for the spine. The hand tooled, gold bound, Moroccan leather version would have cost about £150 each, so we have settled for the next best thing, a rich green with gold-ish tooling on the front cover and the spine.



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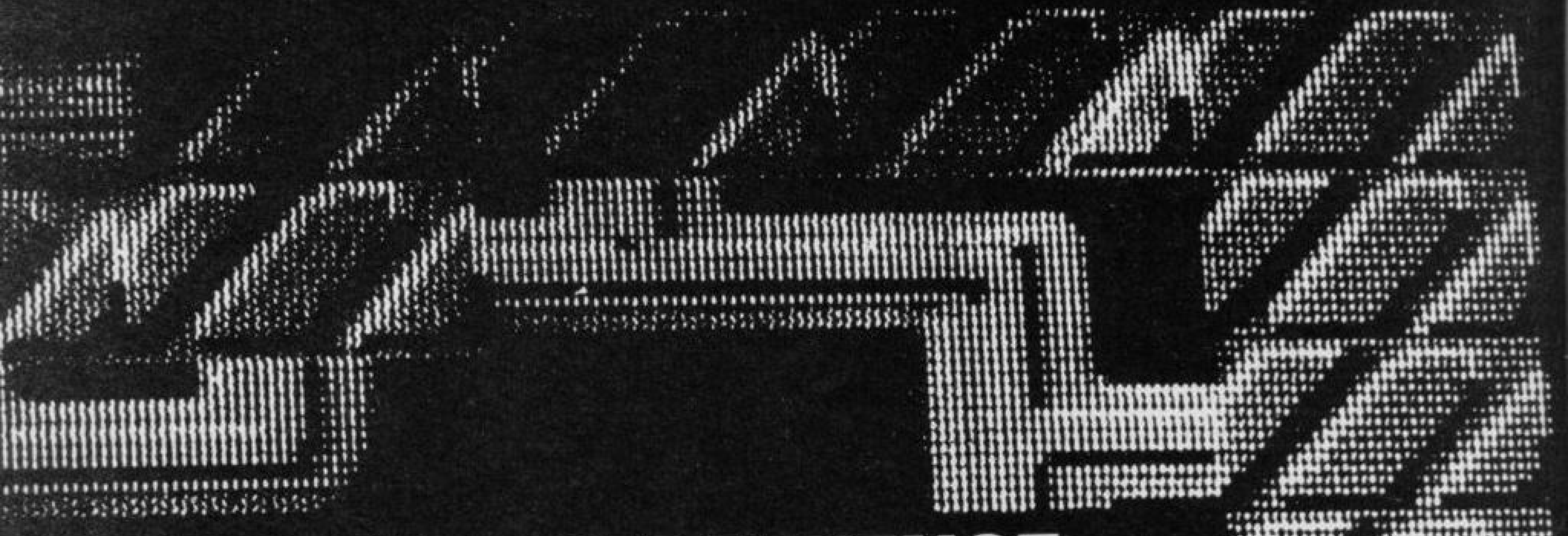


PLAY THE ACM REVENGE COMPETITION AND WIN A REALLY SOOPER DOOPER SWEAT SHIRT.

Hello competitionists. The apprentice competitions minion presents to you a competition of . . . of . . . SWEET REVENGE.

Yes, I am asking you, dear readers, to help poor little me in my hour of need. The 25 best suggestions will win an absolutely fabulous *Obsidian* sweat shirt. Have you read the review of the futuristic arcade adventure elsewhere in the mag? If not, why not?

Anyway, I can hear you all screaming 'how can we enter?' What must we do?, and things like that, so here are the instructions. But first, let me tell you a story.

This weekend it was decided to throw a party to honour Gary Liddon's 19th birthday. Since his squatty little bedsit couldn't cater for a tea for two the flat where I reside was elected to hold the function. So, on a cold Saturday evening people started to arrive, and the party started swinging. Everything went fine and the guests thoroughly enjoyed themselves, including Newsfield's very own **A**bsolutely **A**narchic raver, Jeremy Spencer.

Now, come three o'clock it was decided by all to retire and the merry gathering began to return to their respective abodes. Poor little me went to go to bed as soon as the last straggler had left and found . . . a fridge in my bed!!! Yes, Jeremy Spencer had been up to his party tricks again, what a jolly japer. I laughed even louder when I discovered that my bedsheets were completely ripped to shreds . . .

What I want you to do is jot down on a piece of paper how you think I should get my own back on the rotten devil. If you feel illustrations would help then draw away, I need detail and some really e-e-e-vil suggestions. The 25 meanest tricks will receive a sweatshirt . . . and the best one (or two, or three) will be played on our illustrious, but unthinking editor.

Send thine entries to **HAH! HE WHO LAUGHS LAST . . . , AMTIX, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB** and make sure they arrive before 20th March, there's good fellows.

AM-TIX!
COMPETITION
OBSIDIAN
artic Computing Ltd

AM-TIPS

from Robin Candy

As M Sutton of Swansea kindly pointed out to me there was a slight mistake in the *Dun Darach* solution I printed a couple of months back. The 2* * 25 should actually read 34* * 5. So the code needed for the doors is 45435424. Sorry about that but I got it confused with the Spectrum version.

This month hasn't been a bad one for software so there are quite a few new games I would like tips on particulary the excellent *Ping Pong* from Imagine, *Sweevo's World/Whirled* from Gargoyle Games and the *Gyroscope* lookalike, but a vast improvement on the original, *Spindizzy* from Electric Dreams (the Rod Cousens version).

One last thing before I start on the tips.When you send in pokes could you make sure they are all your own work because nice Mr Rockman of that reputable rag Amstrad User gets upset if I print pokes that appeared in their magazine first and I do hate getting threats of broken kneecaps. Make a Tips Editor's life easier — send in original pokes. Okay, enough of the moans and on to the informative bits.

YIE AR KUNG FU

As promised last month here are some tips for Imagine's classic *Yie Ar Kung Fu* which I am sure you will agree prove more than useful. Thanks to Steve Crosswell **of Croydon for the info.**

BUCHU
Jump towards him straight away and do a couple of long punches followed by an ankle punch. Then finish Buchu off with a flying kick.

STAR
Once again jump towards your opponent but do a roundhouse instead. Follow this quickly with a couple of back kicks and then finish her off with a few rising kicks.

MUNCHA
This fellow is a bit difficult but still beatable. Walk towards him and then jump up. Perform a couple of flying kicks followed byup a couple of rising kicks. If this fails try lunge punches.

POLE
Jump towards Pole and perform about 5 lunge punches then switch to flying punches.

CLUB
Stand still and he will come towards you. As soon as he gets within hitting range, clobber him with a couple of flying punches then switch to rising kicks.

FAN
It may take some practice to beat this lady. Jump towards Fan and do about 6 lunge punches and then do some ankle punches to finish her off.

SWORD
Jump towards him and do some flying kicks and then a couple of lunge punches.

TONFUN
This opponent is very difficult to beat, so plenty of practice is needed here. Stand still until he gets within range and then perform a combination of lunge punches, ankle punches and flying punches.

BLUES
This is the Kung Fu master and, as expected, he is the tough cookie of the lot. Follow the same procedure as used on Tonfun but faster!!

MARSPORT

After revealing how to complete stage 1 of Marsport John McCann **of Lisburn in N Ireland wrote in with the solution to stage 2 but you've got to wait until next month for the final part of the solution.**

1) Go to the sanctum to get the clue 'I'm the sentry; 5 pairs for entry; city through, 5 screens each two'.
2) Get the Mars map and put it in the key slot of the Bar (Marsbar, see).
3) Get the tea from the Bar.
4) Go to sector d, level g, and get the insect.
5) Get the syringe from the Chemist (open it with a pair of boots) on sector c level d.
6) Get the point from the Oratory sector i, level b.
7) Combine the above four items to make the antidote.
8) With the antidote go east from sector e, level c, and enter the danger room. Wait until the countdown has finished and then put the antidote in the locker for future use.
9) Get the clue from the vidtex unit on sector h, level c. 'One monkey says why the other two can't'.
10) Make another eyeshield and get another pair of earmuffs.
11) Combine the earmuffs and the eyeshield to make the Y token.
12) Get the valium from the chemist and go north from sector b, level b.
13) Enter the danger room and wait until the nerve bomb has gone off. Put the valium in the locker for future use.
14) Get the topee from sector, f level b.
15) Get the kettle from sector f, level f.
16) Put the kettle in the key slot of the boiler room on sector i, level j.
17) Get the helmet from the boiler room.
18) Combine the helmet and the topee to make the power booster.
19) Combine the power booster and your gun to make a hypergun, you can now kill the Sept Warlords.
20) Get the clue from the Vidtex unit on sector f, level b. 'One is holy with skill after church'.
21) Get the strainer from the bar on sector c, level f.
22) Get the sunchart from the map room.
23) Combine the sunchart and the strainer to make the T token.
24) Go west from sector d, level e and kill the Warlord.
25) Now go and get the clue from the Vidtex unit on sector f, level e. 'One says nothing, the other says it all'.
26) Get the mute from the music room.
27) Get the manifesto from the oratory.
28) Combine the mute and the manifesto to make the E token.
29) Go to sector i, level d and get the clue from the Vidtex unit. 'One draws near and throws away'.
30) Get the charcoal from sector g, level d.
31) Get the projector from the oratory.
32) Combine the charcoal and the projector to make the N token.
33) Go west from sector g, level i and kill the Warlord.
34) Get the clue from the Vidtex unit on sector d, level i 'One is easy and full of aplomb'.
35) Make another cake and another lead suit.
36) Combine the cake and the lead suit to make the R token.
37) Combine the E, N, T, R, Y tokens to make the key.
38) Put the key in the key slot in the sanctum sector e, level h.
39) Go west out of the sanctum. Now it's up to you to escape alive and with the plans.

DRAGONTORC

Many Dragontorcers out there seem to be getting confused when they get 'tunnel vision', you can only see Maroc and a bit of what surrounds him, this is NOT a bug. If only happens when either there is no light in a room (to remedy use the Light spell) or Maroc has been bitten by certain creatures (use heal spell then move out of that room or just use the light spell). If you are experiencing any problems with the Dragontorc tips then dop me a line and I will see what I can do.

Now that you have destroyed the first crown of Dragontorc proceed to Dreamdowns. If the dwarves are bothering you then lead the elf into them and they will be killed or alternatively they can be destroyed using the Warrior spell.

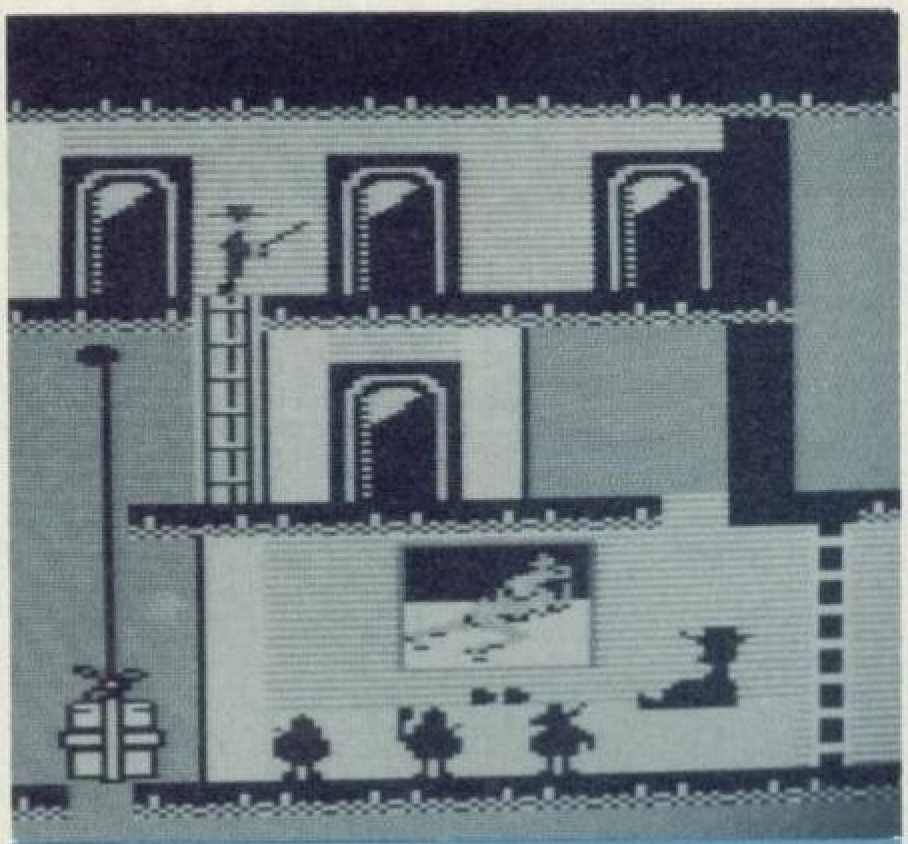
Look for the squirrel. Once you have got him then use him to search the leaves for you to reveal a stone and a torch. Now light the torch on the camp fire and take a bow to the elf. The elf in return gives you a nut. If you give this to the squirrel he will crack it open and reveal the key that is inside, take this. Now enter the ruins with the elf.

Inside the ruins open the chest with the key and take the snake symbol. Use the snake symbol to move the flagstone, and then take the Demon spell that lies underneath. Now go out of the ruins and use the snake symbol to move the flagstone on the woods to reveal an entrance. Go down the entrance with the snake symbol and the lit torch.

Go through the first door you meet and turn off the snake generator with the torch (place the torch on the snake symbol that is on the wall). Now kill any snakes that are still about with the snake symbol. Open any locked doors with the snake symbol and kill any snakes with the lit torch. Open the locked chest with the snake symbol (leave the torch on the floor just in case you get attacked by snakes. Take the crown symbol from the chest, if there is no crown but another snake symbol then put the two snake symbols together to make a crown symbol. Beware of the axe and fireball room. It is advised you use the Slow or Unseen spells if necessary. Search the tomb with the crown symbol to reveal a crown and a message. The message 'When 4 are gone smite anvil with stone' means use the crystal of antithought when four of the crowns are destroyed. Use the snake symbol on the other snake symbol to reveal the exit or use the Return spell. Place the crown on the anvil to destroy it. With two crowns destroyed you should now travel to Trollstones. It is best to use the Warrior spell on the deadly yellow imps to kill them before trying to solve any of the puzzles. It is also helpful to have the lit torch and you must have the Demon spell

Search the leaves using the servant spell to get the Bane gem. If you catch the bird that flies around you will get the message 'Set a thief'. Search the stump for the coin and put it in the water. Jump into the pool to go to Hellsmouth.

Hellsmouth is inhabited by bats that can be killed using the Missile spell and you can kill the snakes using the torch. Find the axe and use this to smash the eggs (place the torch on the floor to kill the snakes), now take the chest key. Look for the chest and open this with the key to get the crown symbol. Now here comes a tricky bit — place the crown symbol on the cursed key while avoiding the balls of red fire. Either Unseen or Slow can help here. Now take the key and use it to open the locked door. When the Demon appears use the Demon spell to destroy it — 'Set a thief to catch a thief'. Take the crown. Kill the eyes with the bane and place the crown symbol on the stone to reveal the exit or use the return spell. Place the crown on the anvil to destroy it.



ZORRO

If you're stuck in US Gold's latest release then have a look at these tips as sent in by Christopher Wilson **Migton, he did send in the entire solution but I've split it into two parts. The second part will appear next month. Right, on with the tips . . .**

1. Go up the vine on screen 1 and collect the handkerchief that the Senorita drops.

2. Now go to the top of the screen which contains the Palm tree and press the fire button when you are positioned next to the boot.

3. With that done go to the hotel room and collect the glass bottle. Then proceed to the room with the drunk in it. Give the bottle to him and wait until he lies down. You can now use him as a trampoline!

4. Return to the hotel room and collect the branding iron with the Z on it. Then go to the room with the bull in it (near the start screen). Place the iron in the fire and jump up and down on the nearby set of bellows. Collect the iron, which should be red, and prod the bull with it. You can collect the object that was next to the bull.

5. Return to the hotel room, again. Collect the bell then go one screen right and place it on the left hand bell holder, which is at the top of the screen. Go back and get the bell again but this time place it in the right hand bell holder. A hole should appear in the ground but don't climb down it yet.

6. Go to the start screen and climb down the well. Go right and then down and collect the plant. Go back up and jump across onto the ball and wait. When the platform returns jump onto it and drop the plant. Wait until your platform reaches the bottom and then go back to the room with the drunk. Go to the top level of that screen and try and force a guard to land on the chandelier, forcing the box up. Go down this hole and collect the chalice but you will just have to wait until next month for the final thrilling instalment of the Zorro solution.

RAID OVER MOSCOW

Not the most exciting game this but if you have bought it these hints from Andrew Wilson **of Dartford may help out.**

In the first screen where you have to steer your ships out of the space hangar, open the doors to the hangar as late as possible because when you do open them your altitude tends to increase but do make sure when you open the doors you are a reasonable distance from them otherwise you could end up crashing.

In the second Zaxxon-like screen there are two good methods for scoring lots of points but one is more risky than the other:

a) This is the more risky of the two methods because without practicing a lot you tend to get killed off quite often. Go up until a missile appears then go quite low and wait for the missile to get ahead of you. Now go back up so you are level with the missile and shoot it! Just continue with this method until you proceed on to the next screen.

b) As soon as you appear on screen, fly low so as to avoid the oncoming missile. Now, just concentrate on how to destroy the ground targets and helicopters, but remember to stay low down. If you should see a row of trees coming towards you then **Don't Panic**. Shoot at the trees and if your bullets go straight through without hitting anything you are safe. If your bullets do hit a tree then just move a little to the left or right and fire again to see if your bullets still hit a tree. Repeat this procedure until the bullets don't hit anything and you should get through safely.

In the screen with the silos, to get the one on the far right, lower your plane until it is almost touching its shadow and then fire at the silo and you should destroy it because you are at the correct height. Now destroy the other silos — except the one in the middle. Once you have done that, get to the same height as the silo in the middle. Now shoot planes etc until there is about 3 seconds to go, then shoot the final silo.

The next screen, Moscow, has eight towers which are to be destroyed. All except two of them are in line with the attacking soldiers. So get yourself lined up with the soldiers and you should be able to get six of the towers. Once all eight towers have been shot you will proceed onto the next screen and the final conflict.

When you appear on this screen you will notice the robot always moves right. You should, after a couple of games, be able to predict the robot's movements so making the task of destroying it a lot easier.

DYNAMITE DAN

For those of you who are having problems with the Mirrorsoft's *Dynamite Dan*, Tony O'Brien of Merseyside has supplied some useful tips.

When you have the 8 sticks of the dynamite walk up to the safe door and you will notice it starts to glow, now move back avoiding Dr Blitzen before the door explodes. To get the plans bounce on the trampoline and jump on to the laser that is just below them. When the laser shoots across, walk on on it until you are just below the plans and then jump up to get them.

Now you have to get out of the safe to do this walk to the far end of the trampoline and make sure you have walked so far that you are only balancing on the trampoline by one foot. After the laser has shot bounce four times, avoiding the girl, and towards the door. You should now be free to head back to your airship and finish the game.

NIGHTSHADE

Ultimate's latest has attracted quite a few tips from people but I don't wish to ruin your enjoyment of the game so you will have to wait another month to find out which objects destroy which nasties. While on the subject of Ultimate watch out for *Gunfright* I've seen it on the dreaded Spectrum and it looks like a game to watch out for.

It is worth learning which antibodies kill which nasties because if you use the wrong antibody the creature will either double itself or change into something even worse. If you press Z then your view will change — this is undocumented, but it does work. Throughout the maze there are four extra weapons. These are used to destroy the four big nasties that are pictured at the bottom of the screen. When you are near a monster and you have the weapon needed to kill it then that object will flash. To destroy the baddy just throw the object at it. If you miss don't worry because the object will just fly past and you can go and pick it up.

That seems to be it for this month but just before I go I will give you a taster of what is to appear in next month's column: pokes!. Yep next month will see some nifty routines for such games as *Nightshade* from one of Liddon's friends, the only one! In the meantime if you have discovered some mind blowingly brilliant tip for any game then send it in at once to: AMTIPS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.

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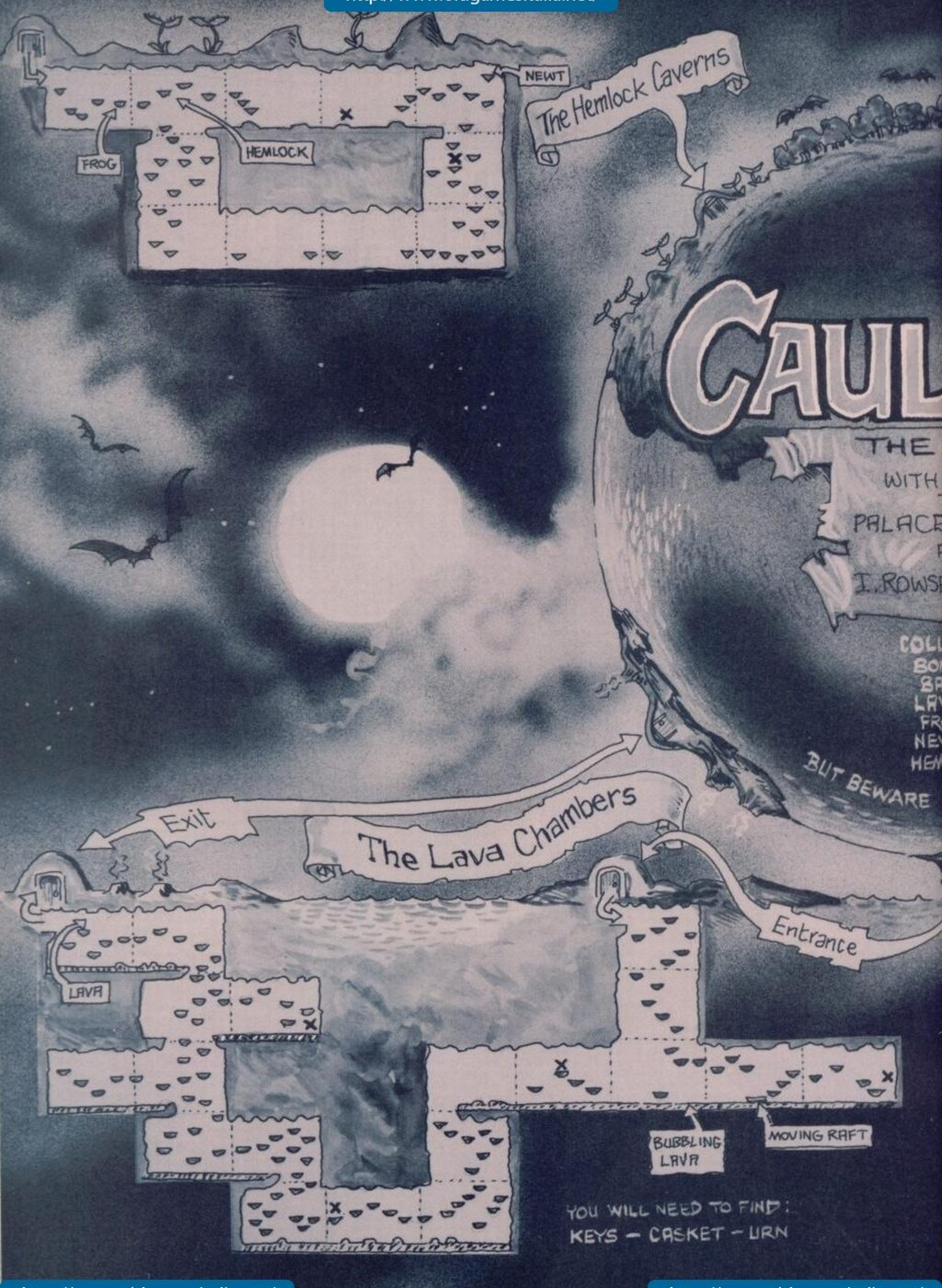
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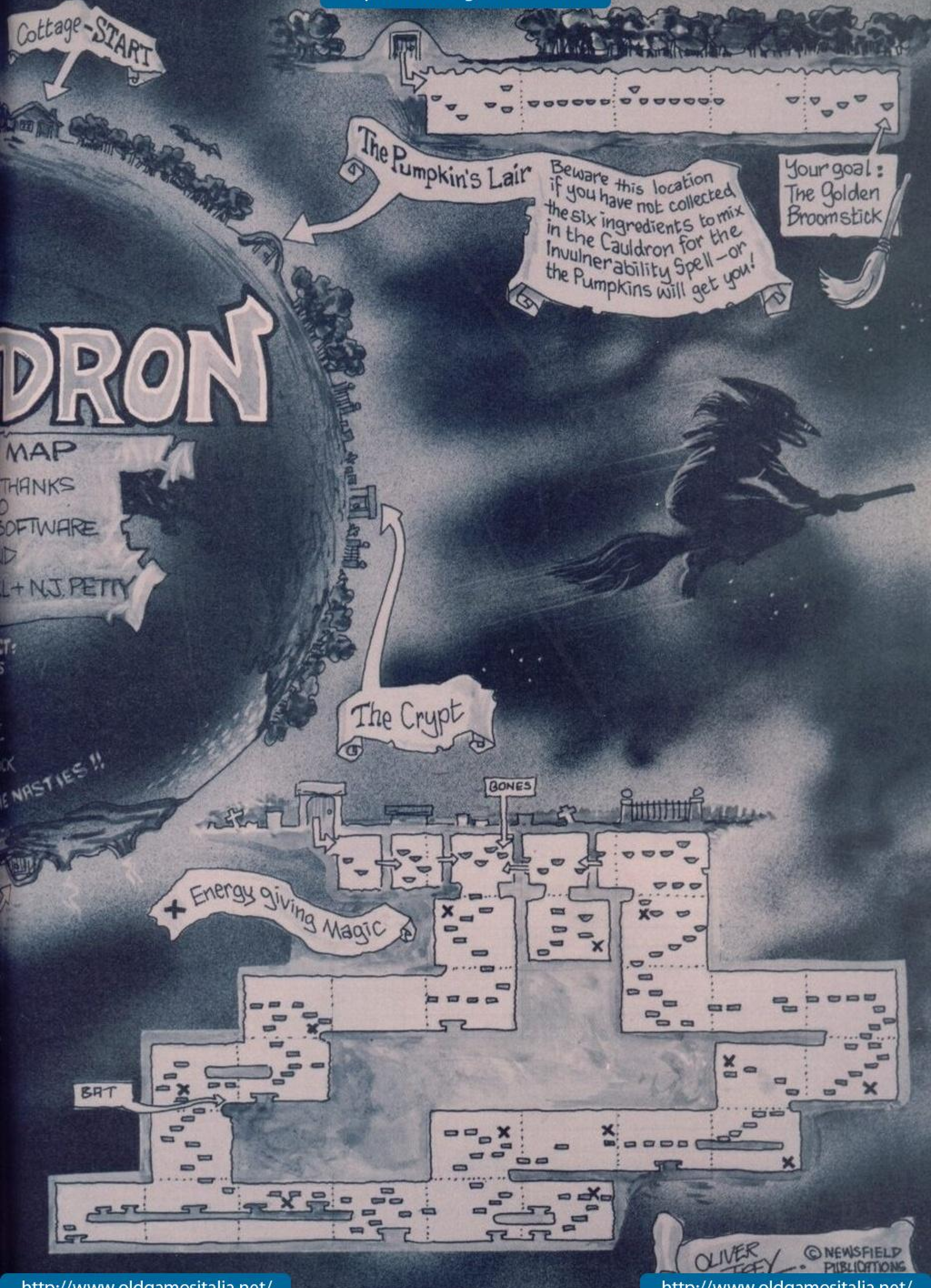
Cottage-START
The Pumpkin's Lair
Beware this location if you have not collected the six ingredients to mix in the Cauldron for the Invulnerability Spell—or the Pumpkins will get you!
Your goal: The Golden Broomstick
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THANKS
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Of course you wouldn't be reading this if you weren't a pretty with it sort of person — a near Amster in fact. Now that you have come to expect so much from AMTIX! — inspiration for life etc. — don't you think it would be a good idea to avoid mundane little aggravations like your local newsagents selling out? Subscribe to AMTIX! and not only will you be certain of actually getting your Amster food on a regular basis but, if Denise plays her cards right, you should get your AMTIX! even before the mobs outside the paper shops start gathering. What's more, once you have become a fully fledged Amster you can take advantage of future subscription offers as well as being able to claim discounts on software purchased from Auntie Aggie of the mail order cage.

Putting together this month's deal took a great deal of bluffing, arm twisting and downright threats, but we managed to 'convince' The GARGOYLE gang to let us offer their three games. Of course it came as a bit of a shock to them when we asked for the brand new Sweevo's World, but by now they must be getting used to our barefaced cheek — spiced with a very large dollop of charm. Well, they wilted. Now you can take advantage of our effrontery and pick up two of their three highly acclaimed titles for absolutely zilch — when you take out a subscription with Denise the Menace — of course. Whichever way you look at it you can't lose — either you are getting two of the finest games free, or you are getting twelve issues of AMTIX! for nothing. Don't hesitate any longer, fill out the form and become a complete Amster.

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DUN DARACH
GARGOYLE GAMES

SWEEVO'S WORLD A stunningly clever cartoon adventure game featuring fantastic 3D graphics and Sweevo — the daftest, most stupid and clumsiest robot in the known Universe. Can you help the idiot overcome the perils encountered when he comes face to face with the Horrid Little Girl?

SWEEVO'S WORLD
GARGOYLE SPECIAL EDITION

MARSPORT You, Commander John Marsh, are required to enter the now abandoned city of Marsport and locate the plans which will help strengthen the protective shield around Earth and keep the attacking aliens at bay. Although Marsport was built to house and protect human kind, since we returned to Earth to escape the enemy aliens the disgruntled master computer has occupied itself by constructing complex and dangerous defence mechanisms to protect itself. Reports also suggest that the city is occupied by a few of the enemy Septs who are dossing down there. I know it's a toughy John, but it's your own silly fault for leaving the plans up there in the first place.

MARSPORT
GARGOYLE GAMES

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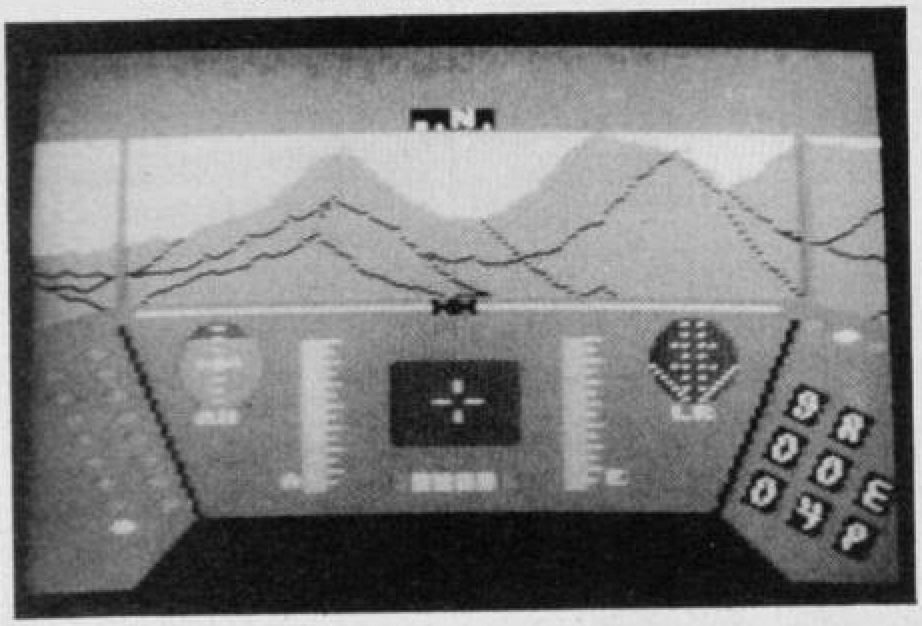
Then fear not we have your best interests at heart. As usual all AMTIX! subscribers will be able to take advantage of our special offers simply by quoting their subscription number, allocated to you by Denise and her computer. You can choose any two of the three games for the measly sum of £6.00 — and that includes Auntie Aggie's fee for stuffing them in a bag and the Royal Mail's price for bringing them to your door.

NEWS



ACTIVISION MOLE REVEALS ALIEN TERROR

Our Spy at Activision managed to snap a picture or two of their latest game, *Rescue on Fractalus*. Written by Lucasfilm (of George 'Star Wars' Lucas fame), the Commodore version was highly acclaimed and it was reckoned that an Amstrad version could be better. As you can see from the picture the game puts you in control of a space craft jetting about an alien surface. Your task is to rescue the pilots of crashed aircraft, but be careful, the aliens don't like you and become increasingly more cunning in their attempts to get aboard your space craft. Be prepared for some pretty scary moments on this mission.

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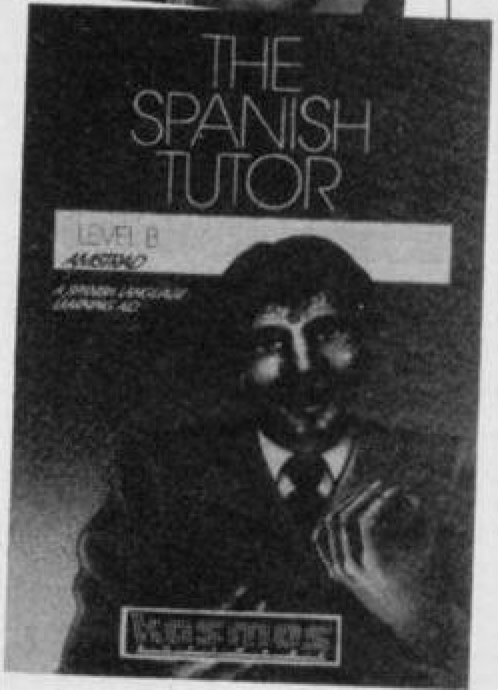
TRY A DIFFERENT MISTRESS

If you have had enough of your *French Mistress* you could try the *German Master* or even the *Spanish Tutor*. **Kosmoss Software** have launched two more language tutorial packs for the Amstrad (Well, what did you expect!) The programs offer a series of lessons, each one dealing with a separate subject area. The programs are designed to cater for the beginner while at the same time providing valuable assistance to the linguist. If you are planning a foreign holiday these packages might help polish not only your vocabulary, but your spelling as well. Each one costs £8.95 on tape or £12.95 on disk.



LIDDON THROWN OUT OF EUROPE

I suppose we had better break the embarassing news before some other smart Alec journal reveals it. AMTIX! writer, **Gary Liddon**, was invited by **Robcom**, manufacturers of Commodore add-ons, to cover the launch of a new Commodore product for our sister magazine, ZZAP! 64. The launch was to take place in Rotterdam, a foreign part for most but definitely alien to Liddon. Liddon duly reports to the airport only to be turned away by the UK customs. Why wouldn't they let him out of the country? His excuse was that he didn't have a passport, or even a driving licence. He had never possessed the former and had left the latter in his Ludlow flat. Well that's his story but shortly after he left Ludlow we discovered a pair of Liddon's trousers under a desk. Would you let him travel to foreign parts without his trousers?

BUILD YOUR AMSTRAD AN ADD ON

The solder sniffers among you might be interested in **Cirkit**'s spring catalogue. It includes a collection of add-ons for the Amstrad computers, ROM expansion cards at £15.95, a parallel and centronics port and a dual channel serial card. Building the boards yourself can save you quite a bit of money, so it's worth getting your hands dirty.

A BETTER QUILL

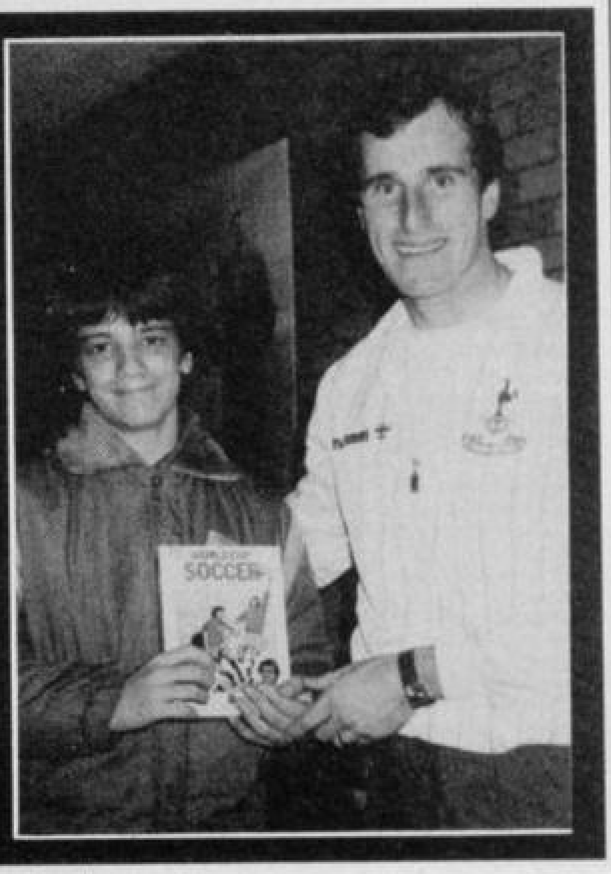
Owners of **Gilsoft**'s *Quill* and *Illustrator*, the original adventure creators, will be pleased to hear that the company is offering to upgrade their versions of *Quill* to include a screen splitter facility to give those adventures some extra zing. The upgrade costs a mere £2.99.

SUCCESSOR TO SOFT AID

After the success of Soft Aid in raising £350,000 for the Band Aid charity a new appeal was launched at the industry bash (called the **InDin**) held at Grosvenor House Hotel just before Christmas. The new appeal is to raise money for the Prince's Trust, a charity set up to help the victims of drug abuse. **Off The Hook** will launch a series of multi-format compilation titles, each having games donated by the major software houses. The fund got of to a flying start the very same evening with £16,500 pounds being raised, £14,000 of which was raised by auctioning a bottle of Champagne — it was a pretty good bottle of champagne.

AMSTER PRIZE

Pictured here are two happy Amsters and two versions of a cheerful Ray Clemence, known for his football skills. Andrew Kerr from Lincoln and **Tim Kimber** from Faringdon, are winners of the **Macmillan** *World Cup Soccer* competition from a couple of issues ago. They had a rip roaring day out, including a tour round the Tottenham ground, the changing rooms and a jaunt through the tunnel. To round it all off they watched the match from VIP seats. Our thanks to Macmillan for looking after them.



THE AMSTRAD SHOW

The Amtix team tramp their way down to London to inspect the goings on at the second Amstrad User Show — JEREMY SPENCER reports

It only seems five minutes since the crush and scramble of the last Amstrad show and, with a third show promised in March, Amsters could be forgiven for thinking **Database** might soon start putting them on monthly. But, despite the impending frequency of these things, and the dangers that foreign travel holds for the Ludlow crew, we ventured down to London. Bundles of still warm AMTIX! in our rucksacks, ready to set up shop on stand 85.

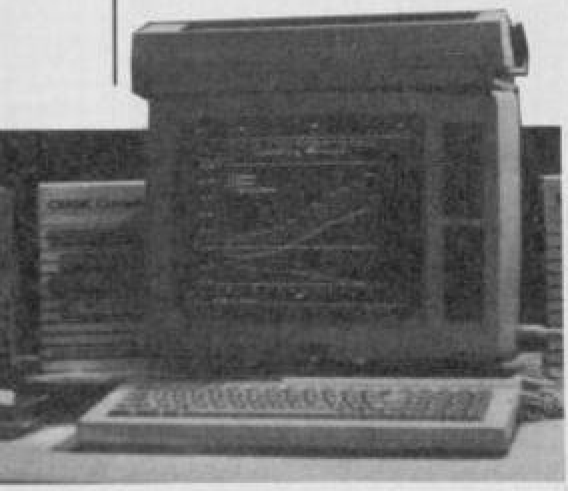
WHERE ARE ALL THE GAMES PRODUCERS?

The second show was held in the same hotel as the first but in a much larger hall, the Champagne Suite (I never did discover the reason for its name but I can tell you that it has nothing to do with free bubbly dripping down the walls — I know, I tasted them). It was heart warming to see that not one of the 98 stands were vacant, even though there did seem to be a shortage of games software houses. Among those that did turn up were **Design Design** with their new compilation disk *Working Backwards* which included that antique but alluring game *The Halls of the Things*. Simon, the marketing manager, had spent most of the day attracting the punters' attention with a laser and synthesiser. The hardware looked very impressive but piles of zapped Amsters cluttered up the front of their stand forcing Simon to make his pretty patterns on the distant ceiling. **Design Design** have come to terms with their destiny and have decided the Amstrad is the machine to concentrate on. From now on they will initiate all new games on the Amstrad and then convert them for the Spectrum.

A Straddles rigged for space flight on the Setanta stand.

The crowds had thronged to the **Martech** stand in the hope of getting their hands on the new *Zoids* game — alas this was not to be — the wretched creatures have still to stir. Just across the isle from Martech were **Britannia Software** who were playing their cards right by not promoting their new quiz game with a scantily clad Bruce Forsyth. **CDS**, purveyors of fine computerised chess and backgammon games, co-habited a stand with the newly formed **Blue Ribbon** software house who were displaying their new range of budget priced games. The only remarkable feature was a little chap who kept leaping out and grabbing passing journalists, like some sort of vampire with a literary taste. In fact, I had only been at the show ten minutes when I was accosted by the Blue Ribbon public relations chap, **David Carlos**, one time editor of *Popular Computer Weekly* now turned PR tycoon.

As I made good my escape I stumbled across what was to prove to be the most exciting game at the show, *Spin Dizzy*, being marketed by **Activision/ Electric Dreams**. It was odd that while the game was at the show, the producers were not. It struck me as being a little silly to have a game like this and yet not actually bother to show it off properly. Perhaps Activision only feel at home in the large and grand halls of the PCW show. Whatever the reason for their absence it must have applied to a good many other large software producers, the show was the exclusive domain of the small hardware/software manufacturers.



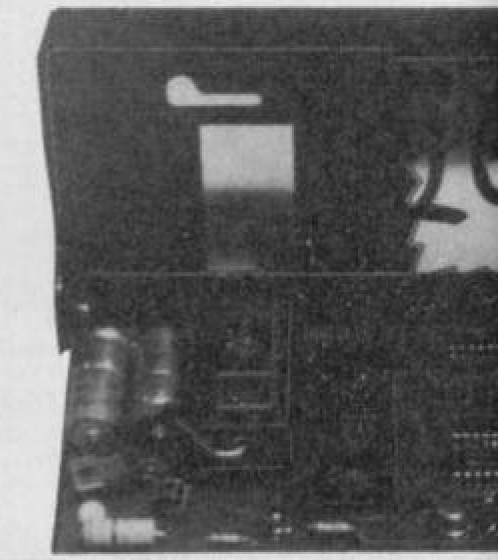
Graphics on CP/M courtesy of Digital Research's DR Graph.

HARDWARE BEYOND YOUR DREAMS

With the games producers staying away it wasn't surprising the show seemed to be dominated by the utility and hardware manufacturers. There was a multitude of bits and pieces for sticking onto the back of an Amstrad, promising to turn it into anything from a graphics station to an IBM simulator.

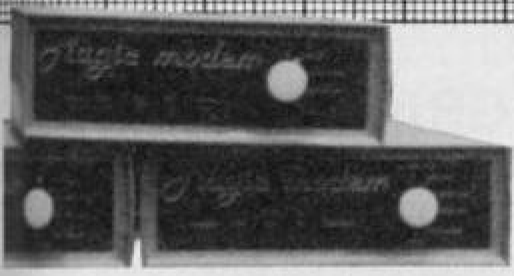
In one far flung corner rested the **Screens** stand. Until recently few of us had heard of this company but now that they have linked up with the German hardware developers **Vortex**, they seem set to make quite a noise. Screens seemed to be selling large numbers of new RAM boards for the 464, the largest version of which builds a Straddles 464 up to a beefy 512K. Some of the other Vortex products were available for inspection and reduced a number of Amsters to a state of shock. The expansion board for the 6128 offered a memory expansion up to one mega-byte, two RS232 ports (one of which is able to transfer data to a like board at speeds which must be illegal), an analogue port as well as an 8 bit centronics port. They also demonstrated the Vortex 20 megabyte hard disk which should be on sale in a month or so for about £600. As if that wasn't enough they announced a MSDOS board for the 6128 which is designed to let the humble (but much nicer) 6128 run IBM compatible software. Two other Screens goodies tended to get lost amongst the magnificence of the display. The first one was a graphic adventure game called *Zania*. I had seen a demonstration of this before and I still found myself wondering how they managed to run a program while loading data in from the disk — a task supposedly beyond the Amstrad. Screens also produced their new business package *The Personal Assistant*.

Of course Screens didn't have the monopoly on hardware. **DK'Tronics** had the complete set of 6128 add-ons, the voice synth, RAM card etc. Not all of the products were ready for sale but nevertheless they made for an impressive line up with each of the different modules dressed up in very smart 6128 co-ordinated boxes. **Micropower**, the company who made a name for themselves with BBC chips, and produce the neatest ROM board for the 464, displayed the prototype of the 664/6128 equivalent. This new board may not be quite as handsome, in as much that it towers above the computer in order to accomodate the ROMS, but it promises to be just as convenient and as functional as its 464 relation. Meanwhile we are still eagerly awaiting the finished version of the companies game, *Dr Who* — it seems to keep slipping back through time.



More for the hardware fans. The EPROM programmer from Timatic Systems. The chip on the left is the one being programmed.

Timatic were the earliest to provide hardware support for the Amstrad and they are still very much on the scene. Their latest product is a sideways ROM card complete with an EPROM programmer, a device which allows the user to stuff his own programs into a chip and then, for ever more enjoy the benefits of ROM based software. Timatic might have been the first with such a product but close on their heels comes **KDS**



The Demon Modem returns after two years, now called the Magic Modem.

Electronics. The proprietor of this company, one Mr Seymore, started selling an RS232 interface while the Amstrad was still in its nappies. From there he went on to produce an all singing, all dancing modem — the communicator 104. Now **KDS** have brought out their own EPROM programmer as have a new company called **Setanta**.

Setanta have only been in existence for two months but they already have three utilities ready; *Memory Boss*, *Sprites* and *Tool Kit*. I was attracted to their stand by an Amstrad that looked as if it had been rigged for space flight. The 464 disk drive was housed in a box that was at least four times the size of the drive and had more lights on the front than a wally's Escort 1300. Stupidly I asked the exhibitor if he was marketing this design as a sort of IBM look-alike console, the sort of thing people used to sell for Spectrums to make them look really beefy. It turned out to be the man's development kit which housed a motherboard which not only boasted an EPROM programmer but a very powerful speech synthesiser as well. After listening to his Straddles chunter away like an electronic mother in law I was impressed. Not only did the software look very easy to use but it took advantage of interrupts which means that Straddles can talk and perform useful tasks at the same time — show me a mother-in-law that can do that!

For those interested in communication the show provided a variety of delights. The shock of the show was the re-appearance of the *Magic Modem*. This little gismo was the talk of the town a couple of years ago when it threatened to blow the roof off the then elite communications club. Two years ago a modem with the features that the then called *Demon Modem* promised would have cost you more than an Amstrad, but this machine promised everything but eternal life for less than £100. The home computer world held its breath — and very nearly suffocated. At the show this very late piece of technology was being offered for sale at £99.95 and that included the interface and **Honeysoft** software. I look forward to getting a closer look.

ARTISTS FOR AMSTRADS

Judging by the number of new graphics products, using an Amstrad for design and art must be de-rigueur. The AMX mouse made its second appearance but this time it was squeaking about its posh new software which allowed the use of colour as well as adding a zoom facility, to get those pixels positioned just so. **AMX** were demonstrating their new *AMX Utilities*, a package of picture editing utilities for use with the mouse. It was amazing the things one could do to pictures, and anybodies' pictures I might add. For example one could reduce or enlarge the whole screen, or just a section of it; you could even take part of a design and 'spray' it over the rest of the screen in the same way as one can on the Amiga. Scrolling any section in any direction was childsplay.

A new company called **Woolf Graphics** demonstrated a product called *The Animator*. The package creates cartoons, or animated pictures, by filling in the frames between two key frames designed by the user. The version at the show was far from complete but some of the effects that it managed to conjur up were very impressive. With any luck we should get our mits on a preview copy for next month.

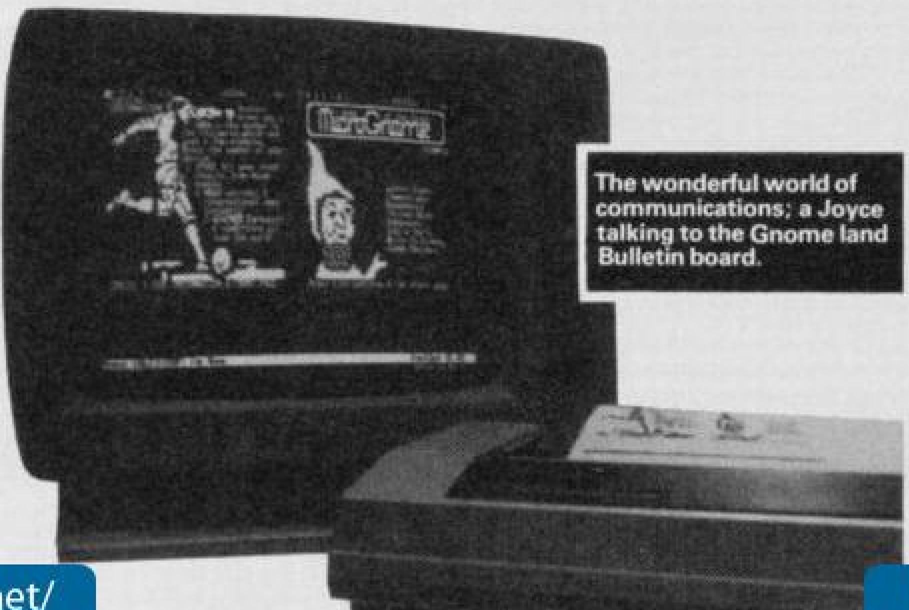
Grafsales put their new graphics pad on public display. For the last three months I have been trying to get my hands on a sample of this device so Franko could put it through its paces. Just when I thought I had got the

Auntie Carol with two hangers on. She refused to give us their names.

manufacturers cornered at the show they told me they had sold their entire stock. They did invite me to assess the combination of pad and software there but I declined, explaining the hustle and bustle of a busy show was not a useful environment to judge such an intricate device. So, while some of the demonstrations looked inviting, we reserve any judgement until we actually get to play with one.

THE BIG WORLD OF BUSINESS

Business software was widely available. **Sage** had their new database on sale which boasted a wide range of powerful features not least being the ability it gave the user to interrogate the information files in virtually plain English. They also announced their rent a Joyce scheme. Business users would be able to obtain a complete 8256 system including the **Sage** accounts software, training and support for a weekly payment or around £10. The new EMP *Personal Assistant* being marketed by **Screens** attracted a lot of interest mostly because a potential purchaser could lay his hands on a complete business package, including a wordprocessor, database, mailmerge, banking and diary programs for a mere £59.95 — for the first hundred copies at least — the rest would have to pay the full price of £149.95. With any luck both the **Sage** database and the *Personal Assistant* will be reviewed next issue along with the powerful spreadsheet *Cracker* from **Newstar**. *Mini Office II* was launched by our hosts for the weekend, **Database**. Since the original version made such an impact on the home computer market we shall have to find room for that as well. **Cornix Software** released their new *Simple Accounts* package and told me a little about a new database they are working on. I know we are awash with databases at the moment, but their intention to create a free format system — which frees the user from boring constraints like record lengths and file structures — promises to be a revolutionary program. It could prove invaluable for the disorganised none computer buffs.



The wonderful world of communications; a Joyce talking to the Gnome land Bulletin board.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

The diversity of products on display made for a much more interesting show. Some of the uses to which people were putting Amstrads goes to show what a flexible friend it is. Apart from the games, business and utility software we were offered music amplifiers with music digitised on disk, a much wider range of educational software than we had only six months ago and even packages covering such diverse interests as gardening. It's true, **Phoenix Publishing** are about to release *The Planters Guide Pack* which includes a book and database on cassette. The user will be able to tell the computer about his garden and then settle down to sift through suggested designs and appropriate plants.

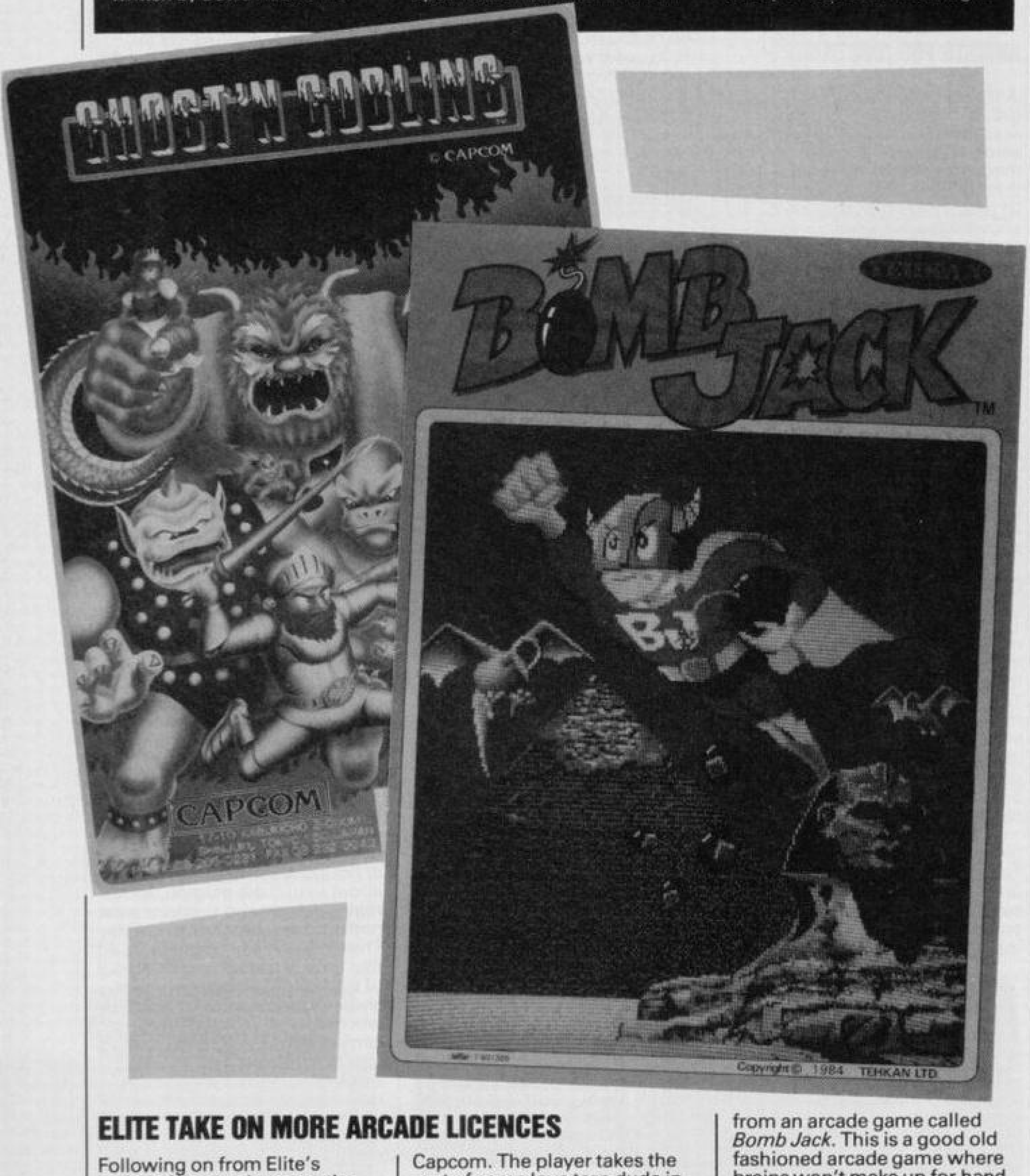
All in all the show went very well indeed. The attendances were very respectable with the bulk of people turning up on the Saturday, and they all seemed to be buying. The only problem seemed to be with the catering. The organisers seemed to have found a novel way of controlling the amount of alcohol consumed by staffing the bars, almost exclusively, with none English speaking personnel. Getting a drink was task for either the expert linguist or for the friend of one.

Those brave enough to stay at the show to the bitter end could enjoy the grand finale. That began just after a lady announced the organisers were about to pull the plug on the mains supply and that everyone had but a few seconds to vacate. The trollies really began to fly. At this time of the show getting out of the building is not only a lot cheaper than getting in, but it's a whole lot faster, as you get carried away on a tide of stalls, stands, products and anxious exhibitors — desperate to get their cars out of hock before anyone else. It never ceases to amaze me how easily a seemingly well organised show can mutate into a war zone, before finally vanishing altogether — in just a few minutes. Never mind, the entire act is due to be performed again amidst the Northerners in March.

MORE MODEMS

Modem House have moved into the Amstrad communications scene in a very big way. They aren't launching one modem — but three. The new range is called the Voyager range and can be supplied for most micro systems. The Amstrad versions include interface and software written by David Husband's **Skywave** company. The cheapest modem in the range is the **Voyager 7** at £183.94. The modem comes complete with auto dial and auto answer and supports 1200/75, 75/1200, 300/300 at full duplex and 1200/1200 at half duplex. The modem can be upgraded to support V.22 protocols as well as auto-baud rate scan, full buffering and Hayes compatibility. The **Voyager 11** has all of the above feature plus a few more, and that costs £206.94. The third modem in the range is the **Voyager 4000** which costs £918.85 but has the specification to match. Modem House have also put together a complete communications pack for the 8256 called *PCW Comms* for £75. The software supports modems such as the GEC Datachat, Voyager 11 and Thorn VX540 and 543. It boasts viewdata, ANSI, VT52, Hazeltine and ADM/ADDS emulation and provides a screen text editor, Telex formater, 25K buffer and easy file transfer with error checking.

Just to make sure that people take notice of this range, Modem House are offering a free Telecom Gold mailbox which could prove to be a valuable gift.



ELITE TAKE ON MORE ARCADE LICENCES

Following on from Elite's series of licenced games, the Midlands based company has announced two more which are destined for the Amstrad. *Ghost'n Goblins* is an arcade adventure taken from a very popular arcade game by Capcom. The player takes the part of some love torn dude in shining armour who has his loved one abducted. Rather than take the philosophical view he sets about rescuing her, a perilous task to be sure.

The second game is taken from an arcade game called *Bomb Jack*. This is a good old fashioned arcade game where brains won't make up for hand and eye co-ordination. The player must guide Jack through a variety of screens and collect bombs while at the same time ridding himself of his foes.

GRADED SPIKES MAKES FINER PROGRAMS

If you live in an area with a poor electricity supply (like Ludlow) and find your Amstrad's data comes out in spots as a result, you just might be interested in a new product from the Welsh company, **Conblock Electrical Ltd.** Their **Smoothline connector** does for electricity what the bowler hatted chaps do for flour, it filters out all the nasty lumps — or spikes as the technocrats would call them. The problems are often caused by the switching of household appliances, like electric showers, which cause a momentary surge in the mains supply. If you happen to be saving out your latest mega-game then you may never get it back.

AMERICAN BOOST FOR AMSTRAD

Amstrad are justly proud of the deal they secured with the giant American retailer Sears Roebuck, for the supply of 100,000 8256 machines this year. The machine is to cost $499 (£350). The deal could make Amstrad the largest UK exporter of computer hardware to the US and is bound to mean that production will have to be increased for a second time.

LET GENNY GET TO GRIPS WITH YOUR FAMILY

Genny is a genealogical database, specially designed to help those interested in their families' lineage, to compile and assimilate the necessary data. An electronic tool for discovering your family tree without falling out of your own. The program lets you store such details as names, sex, date and place of birth/baptism and death/burial. Other information would include cause of death, occupation (more than likely), and names of children etc. The database will produce reports which could reveal exciting relations, like . . . Alan Sugar. One unusual feature of this database is its automatic approval from the Data Protection Registrar for use without registration — because, probably, most of the subjects will be very dead. If you are interested get your £35 pounds ready and contact **David Computer Software**.

BOO BOO TIME

Did you hear us announce last issue that Firebird had bought Ultimate. Well you mis-heard us. What we meant you to hear was that US Gold has taken over Ultimate's marketing and sales operation. Ultimate are confident that the arrangement will allow them to put all of their effort into what they do best — designing and writing games. It was an easy mistake to make and we forgive you, it just goes to prove that you shouldn't believe every rumour..

ALAN GETS A RITA

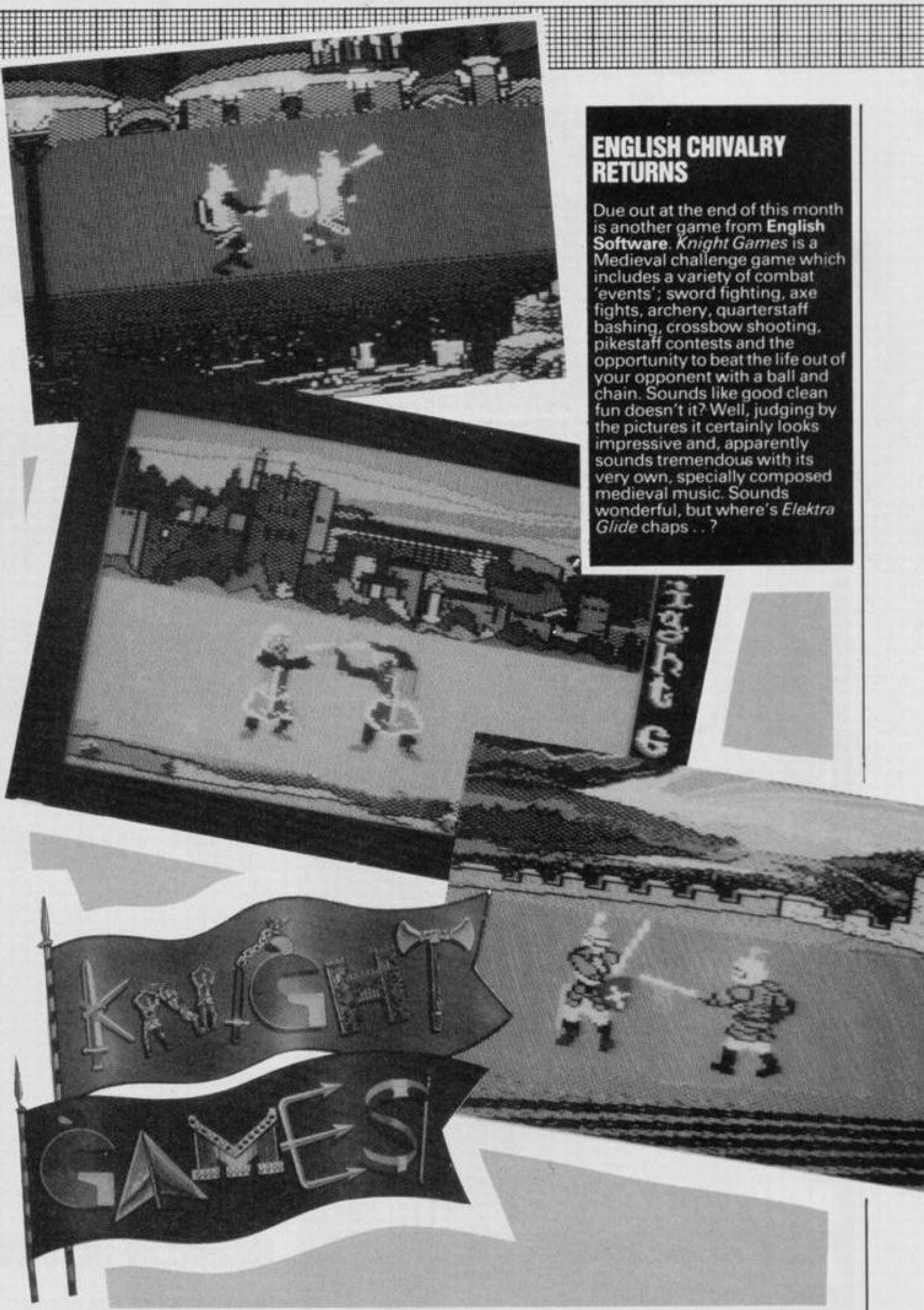
Alan Sugar has won the RITA computer personality of the year award (we double checked this one)! RITA stands for Recognition of Information Technology Achievement and was given away on the first night of the Which Computer Show. The panel of judges included Ian Mcnaught-Davis of Micro Live, David Firnbergh of the British Computer Society and one Dr Douglas Eyeions. They said that Mr Sugar's 'professional aim to make the benefits of information technology available to everyone' impressed them.

PROBABILITY FUNCTIONS AND BETTER TREES

Brian James (Computer Software) sends us news of *The Landscape* utility which compliments the original *Landscape Creator*, 'The first program to use probability functions to simulate artistic creativity.' Sounds like something out of Hitch Hikers. There's more. This new utility has 'dramatic foreground topography, viaducts, better trees and superior castles.' Apparently it's the mathematics of the program that delivers the punch. Must get a look at this.

ENGLISH CHIVALRY RETURNS

Due out at the end of this month is another game from **English Software**. *Knight Games* is a Medieval challenge game which includes a variety of combat 'events'; sword fighting, axe fights, archery, quarterstaff bashing, crossbow shooting, pikestaff contests and the opportunity to beat the life out of your opponent with a ball and chain. Sounds like good clean fun doesn't it? Well, judging by the pictures it certainly looks impressive and, apparently sounds tremendous with its very own, specially composed medieval music. Sounds wonderful, but where's *Elektra Glide* chaps . . ?



HONEY SOFT NOT BUST

At the last Amstrad show I heard a rumour to the effect that **Honey Soft** had gone out of business and run off. Gosh! and we haven't even managed to get the interfaces off them, the ones they offered as prizes for the Christmas issue.

After recovering from a bout of panic I set about finding Chris Honey, not a difficult task, he was at the bar trying to explain to the bartender that he wanted a Bloody Mary — in sign language! 'Is the rumour true that **Honey Soft** have ceased trading?' I asked, to which the quick witted little chap replied, 'It's true that there's a rumour . . . ' (Here's a man who watches too much Yes Minister) ' . . . but it isn't true that we have gone out of business, far from it — life is wonderful!'

It seems that when one of the Honey Soft members left to work for **Arnor**, a Honey Soft arch competitor took this to mean that the business had died, and rather than keep it to himself he wasted little time in telling anyone who was interested, and many who were not, that the company had gone bust. For the moment Honey Soft is located in Devon, but is due to move into some squeaky new offices in Brentwood. In the meantime if you need to get in touch with them you can on **0872 573440**.

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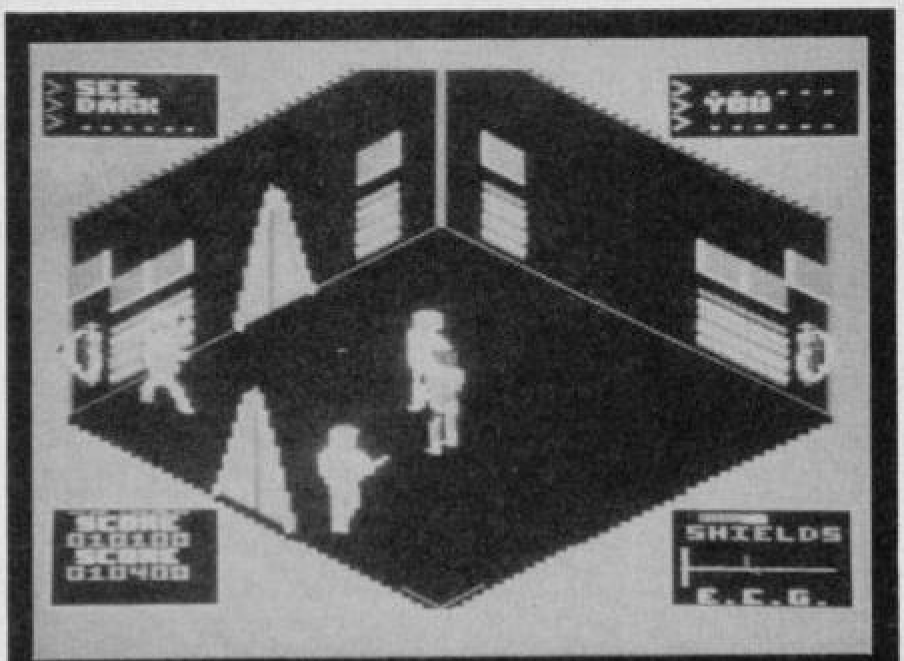
AUTOTECH RENAULT SERVICE



RED HOT GAME FROM ALLIGATA

Alligata are about to release *Meltdown*, 'the first Mega Game' — well that's what they call it. As far as 6128 owners are concerned the label may be justified since the game will not only utilise the machine's entire memory capacity, but it will also need to call on a further 170K of code from the disk. What an earth does the 6128 do with all of this code? Apparently it talks to you, all the way through the game. 464/664 owners will get the same full colour 3D graphics throughout the game's 192 rooms and 18 sub-games, but they don't get the mother in law effect. The game's name is derived from the rather unpleasant situation it puts the player in — living on a moonbase with a nuclear reactor about to blow its cool. To prevent this China syndrome you will be called on to show speed, strategy and endurance. The game is set for release at the end of March priced £8.95 for the cassette version and £14.95 for the disk.

WHICH COMPUTER, AMSTRAD OF COURSE

Intent on playing its business role to the full **Amstrad** took a stand at this year's Which Computer Show, held at the NEC in Birmingham. Despite the launch of the Commodore Amiga across the aisle, the Amstrad 8256 attracted the most attention, particularly from the first time computer users. While the Amiga showed off its enviable graphics ability, the attraction of the Amstrad lay with its price and ever growing range of software, something the Amiga lacks. The Amstrad 6128 was being exhibited both as a serious business tool and as a games machine, which may have accounted for the queues of accountant types waiting for a turn on the race track. All of the other stands were demonstrating business equipment. Your reporter frequently had trouble trying to differentiate between various companies' telephone numbers and the price labels. One lamentable trend seemed to be the increasing use of flash cars to attract potential customers rather than scantily clad female persons. What's the world coming to?

GREMLIN DISCOVER UTILITIES

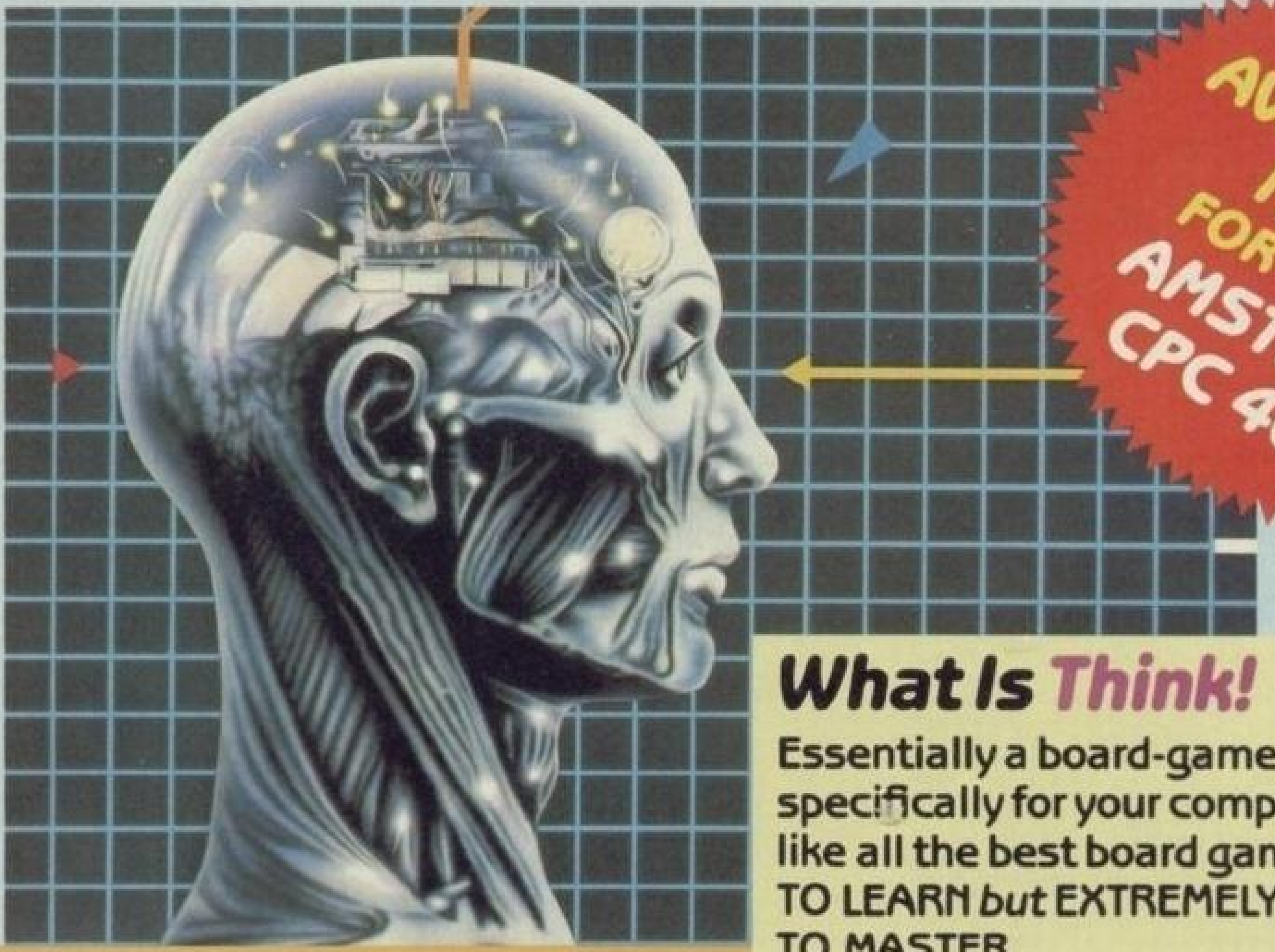
Gremlin Graphics, renowned for their games software, have formed a new label, **Discovery**, for their new range of utility software. The first product for release will be *Pyradev* which, we are assured, is easier to use than it is to pronounce. *Pyradev* is a disk-only system comprising a full screen source file editor, a Z80 macro assembler, monitor/disassembler, disk nurse and file manager. The assembler can handle up to 992K of code and at speed processing 40,000 source code characters a minute. *Pyradev* will sell for £29.95. Future products will include a word processor and a graphics design system. We'll bring you a review of *Pyradev* in the next next issue.

TOBRUK OR NOT TOBRUK

PSS have announced the next title in their Wargamers series for the Amstrad, *Tobruk*. The game is written by **Ian Bird** and deals with the German attack on the North African port in 1942 when the Allies faced Rommel and his respected Afrika Korps. The player will be able to control the tanks, artillery and infantry in a strategic sense as well as in arcade sequences.

THINK!

A supreme test of logic and strategy



AVAILABLE NOW FOR YOUR AMSTRAD CPC 464

What Is Think!

Essentially a board-game designed specifically for your computer, which, like all the best board games, is EASY TO LEARN *but* EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO MASTER.

Played on 6 × 6 grid, THINK! will provide hours of fun and frustration for all ages –

THINK! features:–

! Instant replays ! Icon-driven menu
! Play the computer or a friend
! Joystick or keyboard control

THINK! Variations:–

★ **TUTORIAL THINK!**
a practice mode where the computer analyses and advises on your moves

★ **SPEED THINK!**
each player has a limited time to make each move

★ **BLITZ THINK!**
each player has a limited time to complete all their moves

★ **PROBLEM THINK!**
the computer will set some fiendish problems for you to solve or you can set up your own grids for the computer or a friend to solve.

"... It is a simply wonderfully addictive and ingeniously designed game ..."
Popular Computing Weekly

THINK!
Chrome Tape
SPECTRUM 48K
A Supreme Test of Logic and Strategy
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TIGRESS DESIGNS

Available from all good software retailers *– if it's not there, please order it – or in case of difficulty, send your crossed cheque/PO made out to* ***Ariolasoft UK Ltd.****, including your own name and address to* ***Suite 105-106 Asphalte House, Palace Street, London SW1E 5HS***

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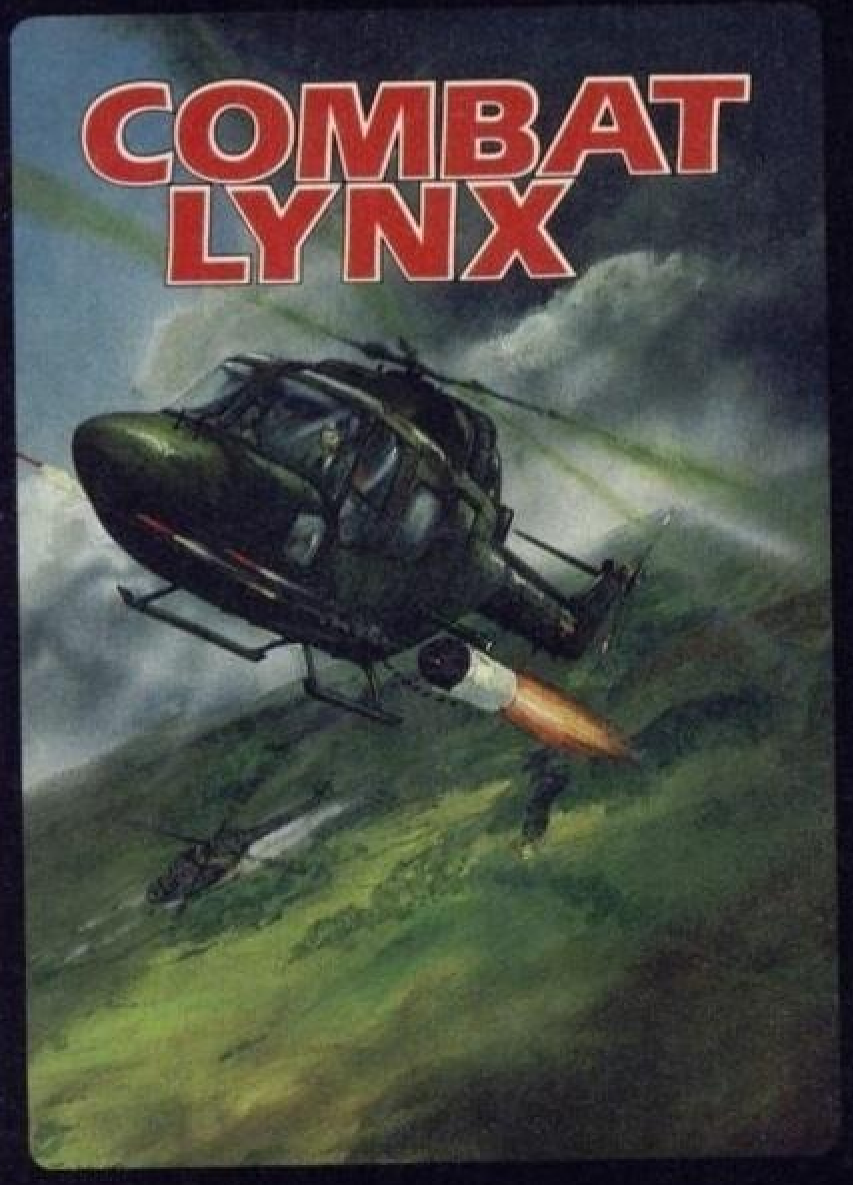
DURELL



COMBAT LYNX (Air-to-ground Battle Simulation)

Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95
BBC/Electron	£8.95

"Combat Lynx is both simulation and shoot-em-up games in one. The 3D effect created by using contour-line graphics tends to give it a more technical feel, so more like a simulation, but on the other hand there are lots of jets and enemy helicopters whizzing around and ground forces shooting at you which gives the game its instant playability appeal. Once you get the hang of coping with everything, it's possible to play a game of high strategy which involves not only arcade skills but those of forward planning. For people who enjoy strategy type games, Combat Lynx should provide hours of fun, while for those who prefer something instant and fast - choose skill level 4 and hang onto your hats! Generally the graphics are most impressive, with a few attribute problems when objects are about to become hidden, but these are minor in what is otherwise an engaging and challenging game."

turbo
esprit
DS 1

TURBO ESPRIT (3D Simulation Car Chase)

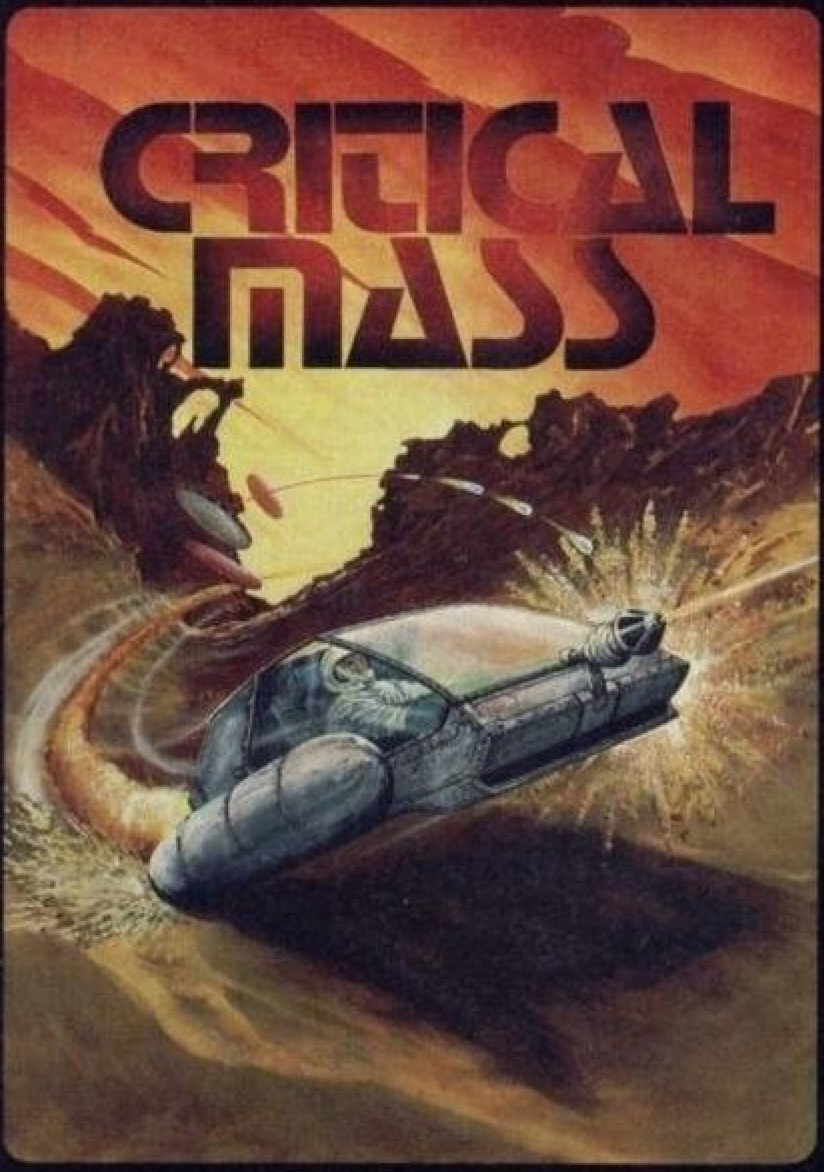
Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95

You are a special agent equipped with a Lotus Turbo Esprit. An international ring of drug smugglers are about to make a huge delivery of heroin, and must be stopped at all costs. The drugs are stored at a number of houses in the city, and will be taken by cars to an armoured van which will be cruising around the centre. A raid on the van before completion of the delivery would leave some of the drugs in circulation. Similarly a raid on any of the houses would alert them to your squad's activities. You must therefore try and pick-off the cars one by one before they make their drop, and then try to stop the van before it escapes. The delivery cars will be backed-up by 'hit' squads - so watch out!

(Developed with the support of Lotus Cars Ltd)

NEW YORK MAP

HIT-CAR CLOSING IN!

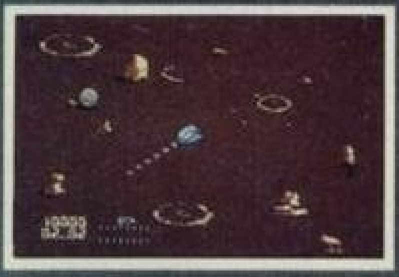


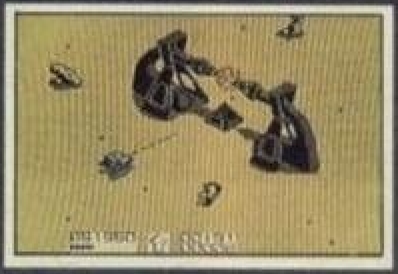
CRITICAL MASS (Arcade)

Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95

An outlying system of the Terra Federation has set up an advanced anti-matter conversion plant on a centrally positioned asteroid to supply the local colonists with energy. A surprise attack by alien forces has successfully overcome the asteroid's defences and the aliens are now threatening to self-destruct the power plant unless the colonists offer an unconditional surrender. The self-destruction process would effectively turn the power plant into a massive black hole that would wipe out the entire planetary system along with a number of nearby stars. Unconditional surrender offers an equally horrific prospect. Your mission is to infiltrate the enemy position and disable the anti-matter plant before the aliens achieve CRITICAL MASS.

"This is the biz!......The graphics and playability of this game are superb, making it well worth the money."



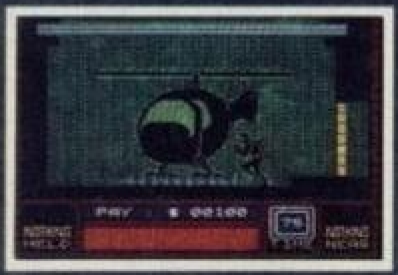


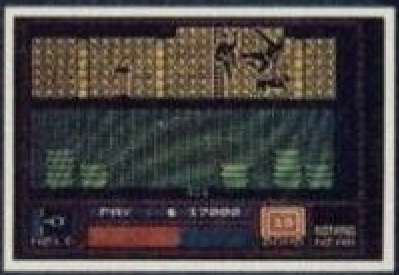
SABOTEUR (Martial Arts Arcade Adventure)

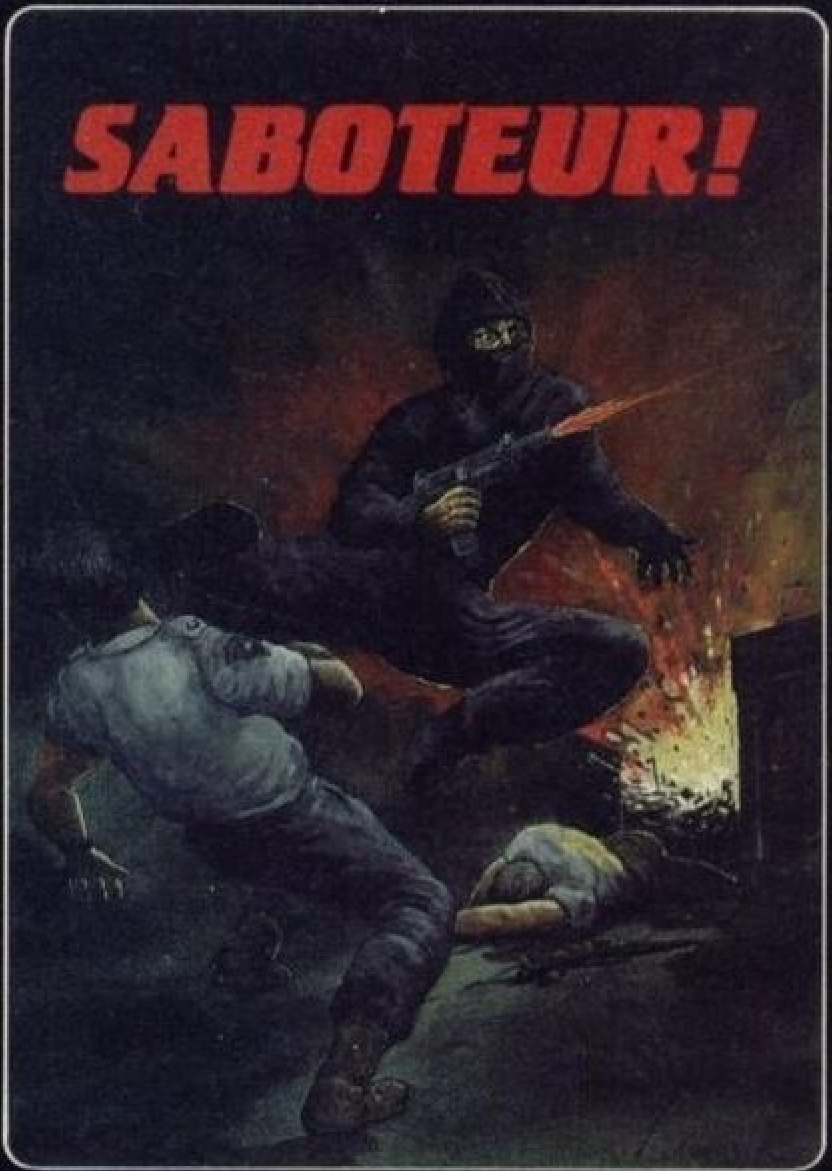
Spectrum 48k	£8.95
Amstrad 464/6128	£8.95
Commodore 64	£8.95

You are a highly skilled mercenary trained in the martial arts. You are employed to infiltrate a central security building which is disguised as a warehouse. You must steal a disk that contains the names of all the rebel leaders before its information is sent to the outlying security stations. You are working against the clock, both in getting to the disk, and in making your escape. You must enter the building from the sea by rubber dinghy, and will then only be able to leave by the helicopter on the roof. You will have to find your way around the warehouse, making use of the guards' own weapon supplies in your struggle through overwhelming odds.

"Saboteur is without a doubt one of the best arcade games I've seen for a long time and a welcome departure from the plethora of licenced/endorsed product that the industry seems to currently favour. Recommended."







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software getting harder

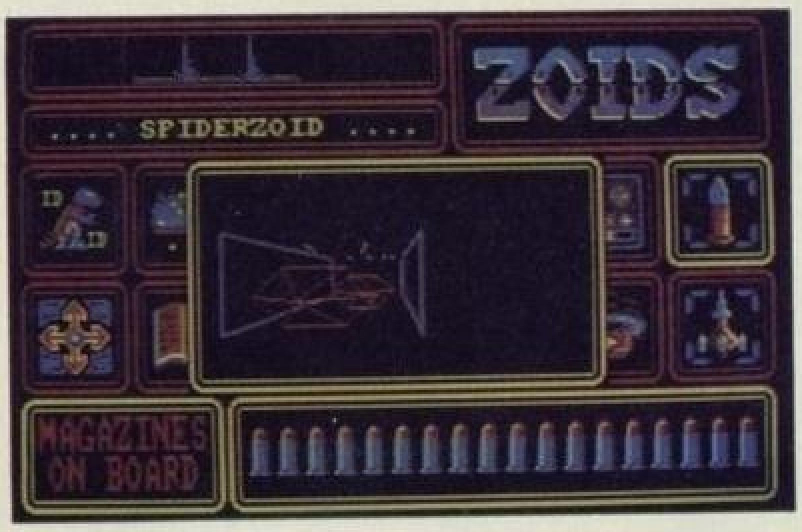
MIND MELDING WITH A MONSTER MACHINE

Inhabitants of Zoidstar built massive, complex fighting machines, **Zoids**, which eventually allowed them to defeat all their enemies in battle. When the potential for real war was over the organic life forms found uses for them in the arena and developed androids to control the Zoids and one-on-one battles were fought for the entertainment of the population. Suddenly disaster struck the planet in the form of a freak meteor storm and all living organisms were destroyed, leaving only immensely powerful fighting machines controlled by sophisticated androids to inherit the planet.

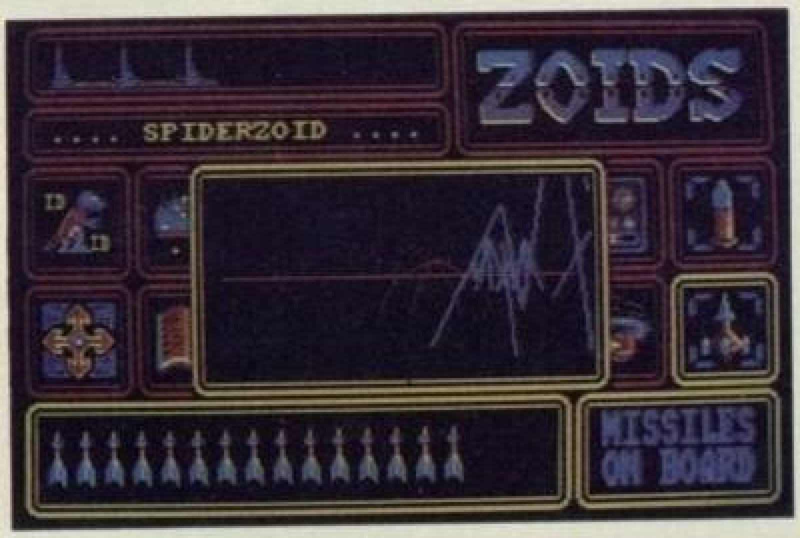
A far-flung standby Zoid battleforce patrol attempted to return to Zoidstar after hearing a garbled SOS, but their transport ship crashed on Zoidstar's cold Blue Moon. Only the Zoids survived, and they soon discovered that the freezing temperatures on the moon meant they'd have to redesign themselves . . . and thus the Red Zoids were formed, gaining their colour from heat which they radiated.

On the freezing planet the Red Zoids learned how to operate as a unified fighting force and decided to return to the Zoidstar recolonize it, completely destroying the old

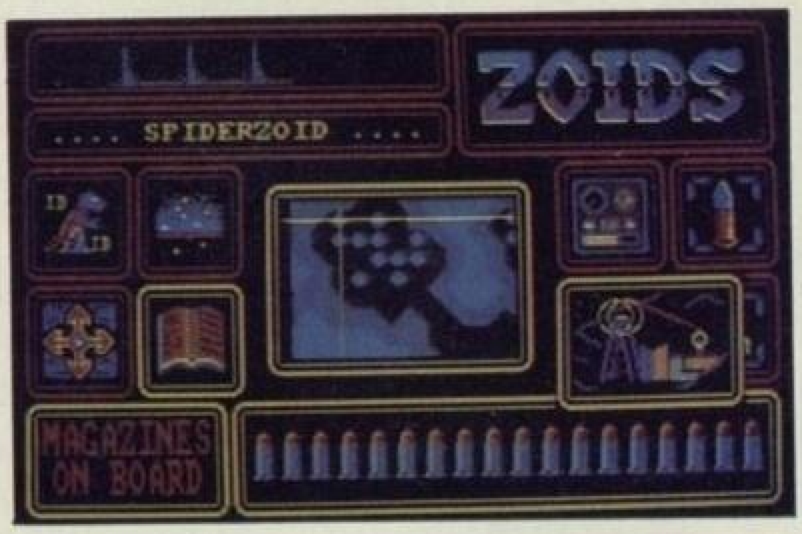
ZOIDS is set a long time in the future on a planet called Zoidstar and follows the post-cataclysmic events which befell a highly advanced and warlike race.



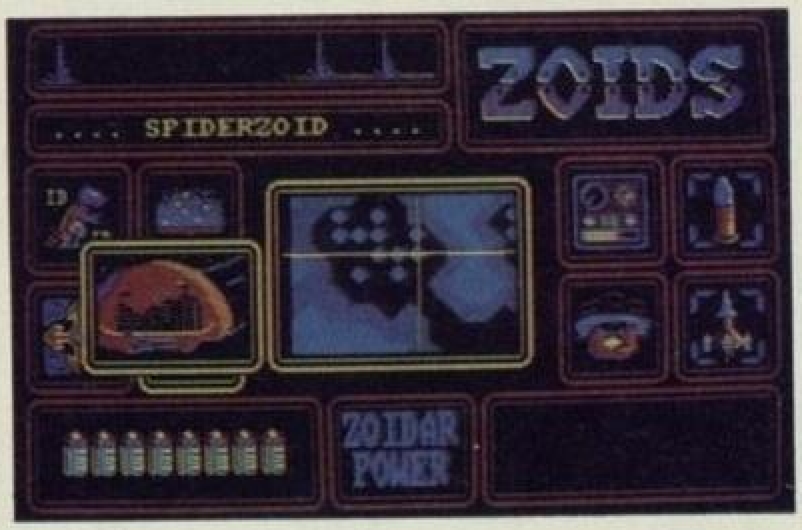
Watch out! Zoid under attack. Shoot down incoming missiles or die.



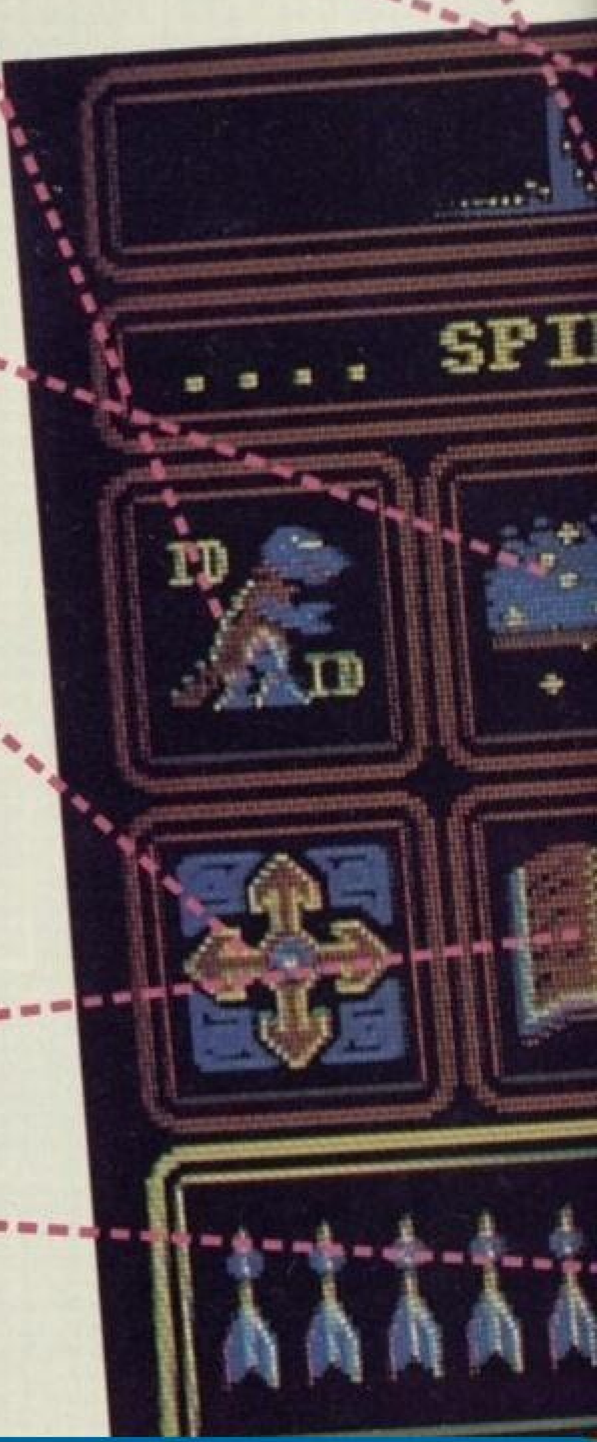
Steering your missile home. Left/right to dodge the bits of scenery that get in the way!



Long range targetting map, used when calling up a radio strike.



Taking a closer look at one of the features of the city network via the INFORMATION icon opens a little window — this time revealing a city dome



ZOID ID Icon
Used in conjunction with the short range map to identify Red Zoids. When the icon is selected the map switches to short range and a cursor appears. Move it over whatever you want to identify, press fire and two windows emerge from the icon, one showing a picture of the Zoid under examination and the other giving a few brief words of description.

ZOIDTHOUGHT
This display shows the mental condition of the Zoid. This can be interpreted as an comprehensible message.

YOUR CURRENT ZOID

SCANNER Icon
This picks up and identifies objects located above or just below the ground radiating a signal. If there are any pieces of Zoidzilla or Zoidar power pods around then it tells you. (Zoidar power pods provide extra energy and ammunition if picked up and play an essential part of the game). Use this icon to scan the wreckage of a city dome since power pods can often be found in the debris.

MOVE Icon
The map goes into long range mode, and a cursor appears over your Zoid's location. Move the cursor to the place where you want to go and press fire. It then follows the course dictated by the cursor automatically (unless it senses danger on the way) allowing you to concentrate on other Zoid functions.

INFORMATION Icon
Works like the Zoid ID icon, except it can be used to call up information on installations — city domes, mines and radio beacons.

THE STATUS DISPLAY
A highly important display that should be referred to regularly. The conditions of all vital functions — ammunition remaining (missiles and bullets), power, damage sustained are shown, and it also tells you how many pieces of Zoidzilla are in your possession.

breed of Blue Zoids. Red Zoid battle squadrons were made ready and the attack followed.

The few Blue Zoids that survived the initial onslaught regrouped and set about building a new Blue Zoid they called **Zoidzilla**; the ultimate fighting machine, capable of challenging the might of the leader of the Red Zoids, **Redhorn the Terrible**. The Zoid war had begun.

It was then that a small and insignificant space craft crashlanded on the planet. A Blue Zoid patrol reached it first and discovered a humanoid survivor, who became known as **The Earthman**. He soon learned the ways of **Zoid-thought**, the means by which a pilot communicates with the Zoid which carries him, and proved himself to be a fearless and cunning adversary.

The Earthman drew up a plan which, if successful, would win the war for the Blue Zoids. He volunteered to merge minds with the mighty Zoidzilla and be transported to the middle of the Red Zoid city complex and strike a fatal blow from which the enemy would never recover.

The plan went ahead, but disaster struck — as the Blue Zoid spacecraft containing Earthman and Zoidzilla descended, a missile struck it destroying the craft and Zoidzilla was scattered over the landscape. The Red Zoids soon recovered the six pieces of Zoidzilla and buried them deep under six different city domes. With the Earthman presumed dead and with the loss of their mightiest fighting machine, the Blue Zoids seemed doomed . . .

All was not lost, however, the Red Zoids failed to spot a small Spiderzoid scuttling away from the wreckage — it contained the Earthman. **You**.

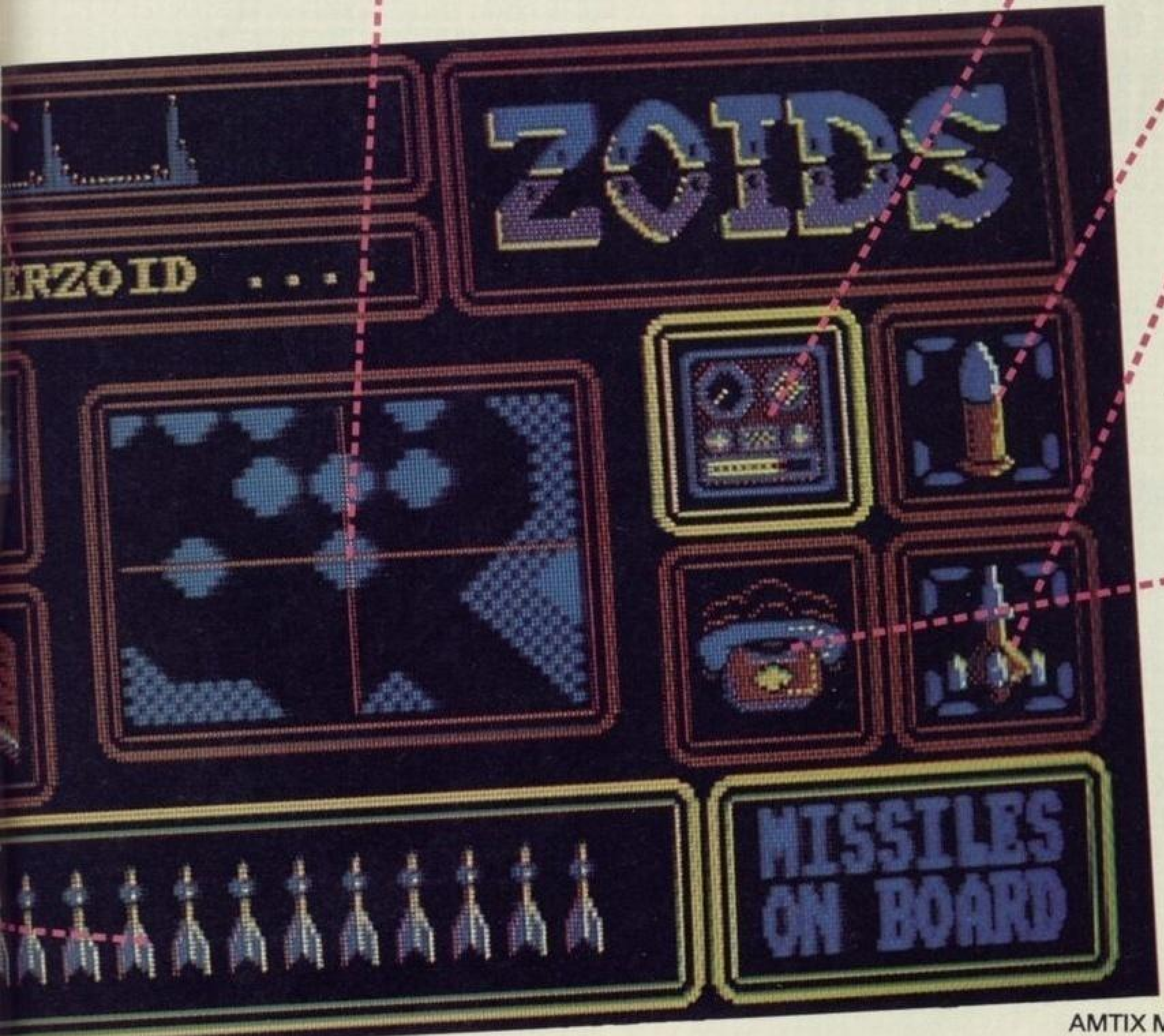
The game commences: you are in that Spiderzoid, mind merged with the machine's consciousness and in control of its functions (annotated on the main picture). Determined to destroy the Red Zoids you decide to collect the six pieces of Zoidzilla, a hurculean task. Every time a segment of the mighty machine is recovered your Zoid is upgraded to a more powerful, stronger machine until finally, with all six pieces collected you become the awesome Zoidzilla. It is then that you can seek battle with Redhorn the Terrible without fear of being destroyed.

When merged with a Zoid icons are used to control it. When one is selected a series of windows pop out onto the main display allowing you to access various movement and defence systems. Don't forget, the Zoid isn't just a blundering machine and does have a mind of its own and occasionally disobeys orders when it thinks you've made a wrong move.

Since completing the game is a monumental task it can be saved, although only if the Zoid thinks it's in a safe situation. *Zoids* should be in your shops soon at **£8.95**.

Julian Rignall

The Red Zoid environment is a complex one which comprises ten strongholds, each containing a number of cities, a mine, a powerplant and a distress beacon. Each stronghold is well guarded by Slitherzoids and each contains a reserve of other, more powerful Red Zoids which are released in times of crisis. The Red Zoids have a powerful tracking system and follow your every movement, so it's wise not to spend too much time in a one area. If you start bombarding any stronghold then its distress beacon automatically emits an SOS signal summoning Redhorn and Mammoth the Destroyer. If you see these trudging over the horizon then move fast otherwise your Spiderzoid will be an ex-Spiderzoid!



THE MAP WINDOW

The map display has two magnifications — long range and short range. The long range map is used mainly to show the surrounding landscape and to plan moves. When planning the route for your Zoid to take move the cursor to where you want to go and your Zoid travels there, providing there are no hazards en route. Short range shows your immediate vicinity, with you at the centre. In this mode the map also shows whether there are any Red Zoids in the locality. As your Zoid moves, the map scrolls.

STATUS Icon

Select information to be displayed in the STATUS DISPLAY area.

GUNS Icon

Automatically accessed by the Zoid if it comes under fire. A window emerges showing the incoming missiles. A "3D Perspective Enhancer" is overlayed to help you aim the gun and shoot down the missiles before they strike you. If a missile hits home then ten percent is added to your damage.

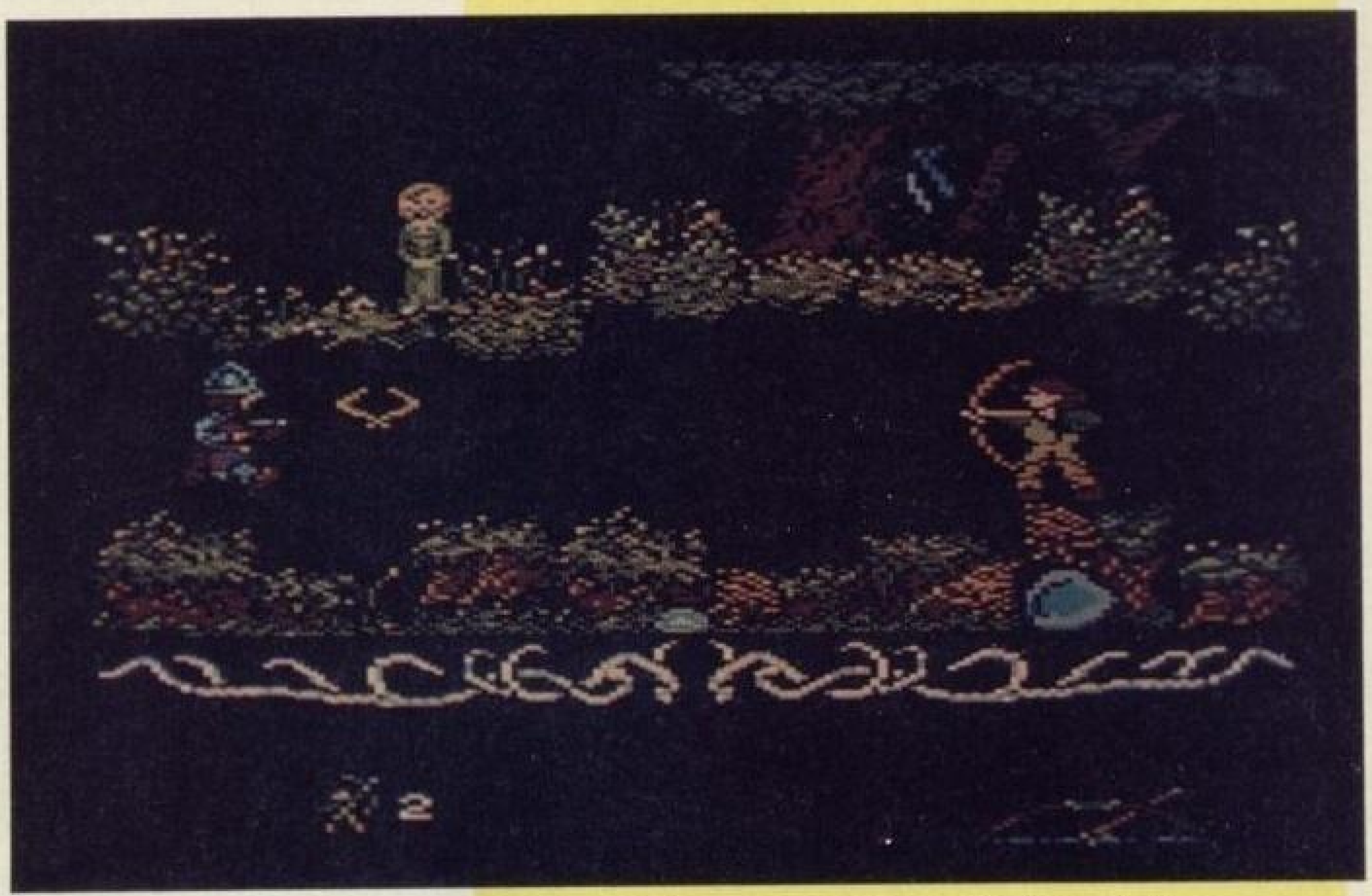
MISSILES Icon

Launches camera-equipped missiles. When a target has been selected a window emerges showing the flight-path of the missile as seen through the camera. During flight you have control over a missile's left/right trajectory, and you have to guide the missile past obstacles to its target. A window with a mushroom cloud appears on detonation.

RADIO BASE Icon

Used to call up home base and dictate instructions. If you want to call a long-range nuclear missile strike on a Red Zoid installation then simply access this icon. Since a strike is launched from halfway across the planet it can take anything up to half a minute to reach the target, but this sort of offensive is very effective and is a guaranteed success.

Also used when a piece of Zoidzilla is discovered — call up base and tell them of its location. A drone ship is beamed down to pick it up. When a piece is recovered your Zoid is upgraded to a more powerful model. The background colour of your display window changes and a new Zoid name appears at the top. The order is Spiderzoid, Scorpozoid, Trooperzoid, Tank, Great Gorgon — finally Zoidzilla himself.



Our legendary hero despatches one of the sheriff's evil minions.

AT THE DROP OF AN ARROW

Most people are familiar with the Legend of ROBIN HOOD, the brave peasant who robbed the rich to feed the poor. Recently the legend has been portrayed on TV as well as in an adventure game by Adventure International. Now ODIN have brought the legend to the Amstrad in the form of an arcade game.

There came into the Sheriff of Nottingham's possession a **silver arrow** which meant nothing to the Normans, the Saxons, however, held it to be a sacred symbol of freedom. Wishing to ensnare the young Robin, who was creating havoc for the Normans by doing a spot of robbing here and there, the Sheriff offered the silver arrow as a prize in an archery contest. Quite aware that Robin would not be able to refuse the challenge, the wicked Sheriff deployed his legions of killer knights in the forest around the castle, with orders to slay Robin on sight.

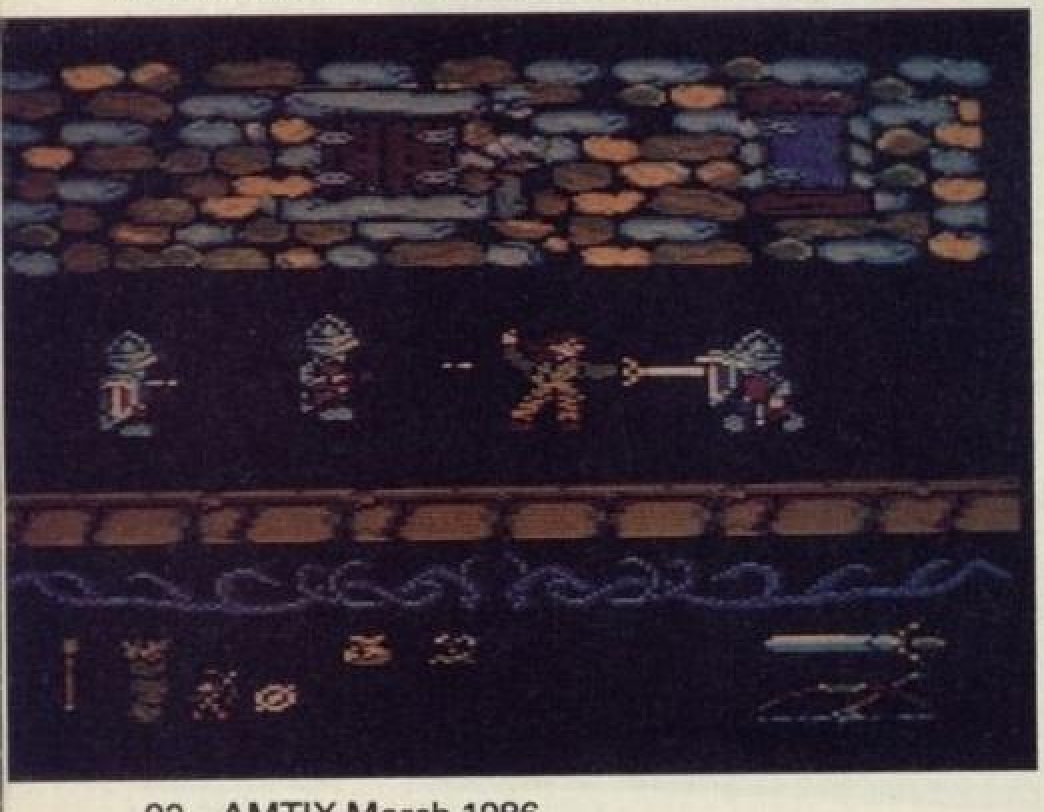
You play the part of Robin and must get him to the competition in one piece. But don't despair — your quest is not totally hopeless. To start with, you are armed with a trusty cudgel — fine for doing a bit of Norman bashing, but it is a dead loss in an archery competition! Fortunately, somewhere in the wood is a **wise old Ent** (of Lord of the Rings fame) who has in his keeping a nice pointy sword, a bow and three arrows **BUT** you must pay him three bags of gold for each item.

Finance comes in the form of a fat Bishop whose pockets are overflowing with gold, although before you can get his money you must overcome his contingent of crossbow wielding knights. No easy task, but being the mighty Robin of the Wood it shouldn't prove impossible.

Also lurking in the great Wood is an old NHS Hermit complete with life-restoring elixirs. Just walk up to him if you're injured, and should he be in a good mood he gives you an extra life. As well as the hermit there are a few witches who can be a help or a hindrance depending on how many flowers you carry (they use flowers for their magical mixtures, generally the more you have to offer, the better).

So there you have all the details. Now drool over the pictures. *Robin of the Wood* should be hitting the shops soon and it will set you back **£9.95.** From what we've seen of the game so far, we think it will be worth it.

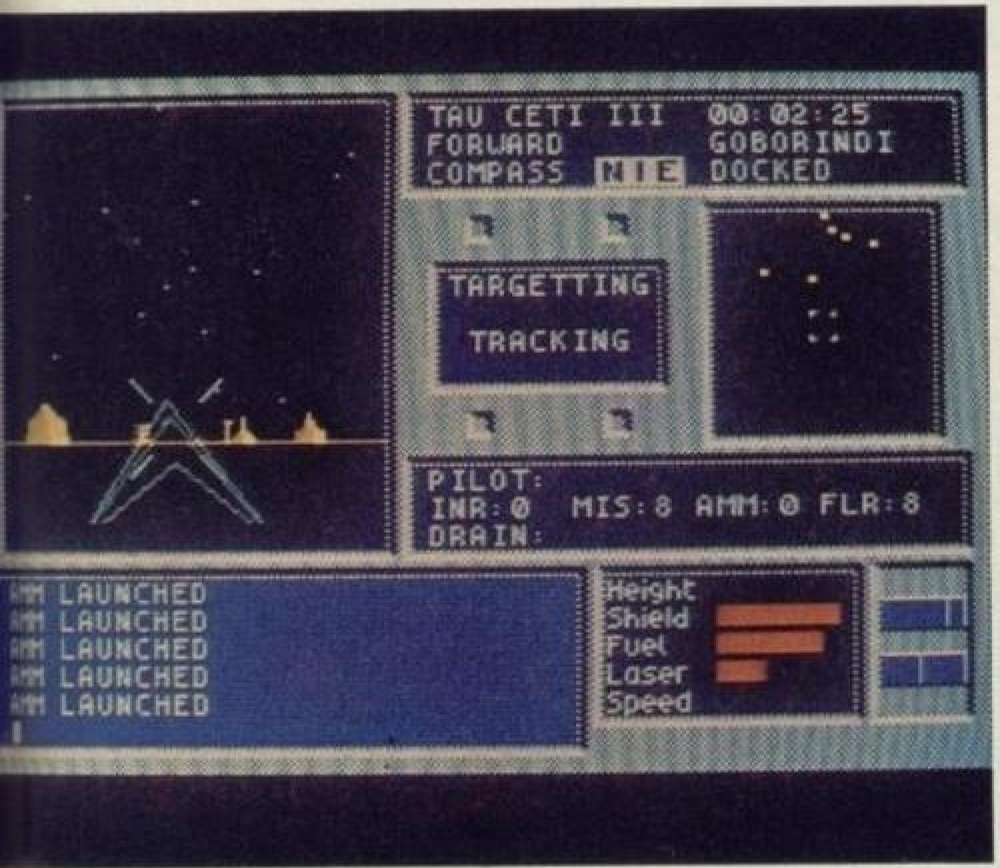
Robin Candy



In true Errol Flynn style, Robin (the Hood, not Candy) takes on the enemy three at a time.

MAPPING THE OUTER REACHES OF SPACE

The city is near but so are the enemy. If in doubt — nuke it . . .



```
TAU CETI III   00:02:25
FORWARD        GOBORINDI
COMPASS  NIE   DOCKED
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PILOT:
INR:0   MIS:8  AMM:0  FLR:8
DRAIN:
```

```
AMM LAUNCHED
AMM LAUNCHED
AMM LAUNCHED
AMM LAUNCHED
AMM LAUNCHED
```

CRL's latest game features fast moving 3D graphics in a shoot em up with strategical overtones.

Radar shows something coming in from the East. Two things. Turning round, your craft catches the edge of a building. As you hit the ground, the landscape shakes. Laser bolts cross your vision. They're moving too fast for infra red. You fire a flare and the scene is bathed in light, allowing you to locate the closing droids. Quickly you launch a missile: as the deadly diamond shaped device despatches one of the droids in a violent explosion, the second droid passes over your head. The shields are getting low as lasers keep hitting you from the rear. Getting the ship in your sights, your own lasers return fire creating a fireball on the horizon. You were lucky that time. Maybe it'll be easier in the morning . . .

As a futuristic troubleshooter, you find yourself about to face your greatest challenge yet. The human colonies on the third planet of the **Tau Ceti** system have been annihilated by the planet's robot defence system (which is totally out of control). A Gal-Corps cruiser, floating silently in orbit around the planet, sends your heavily armed one-man craft down to the surface. Computers on board your own craft can detail the accessibility of each city and the strength of its defences. The information you have puts your situation into perspective — the chances of success are **Not Good**.

After landing, your ship can leave the docking chamber and you begin to explore this devastated world. Buildings are still intact but all that moves is potentially deadly. Defence ships are intent on destroying anything that threatens their lifeless existence and **you constitute that threat**.

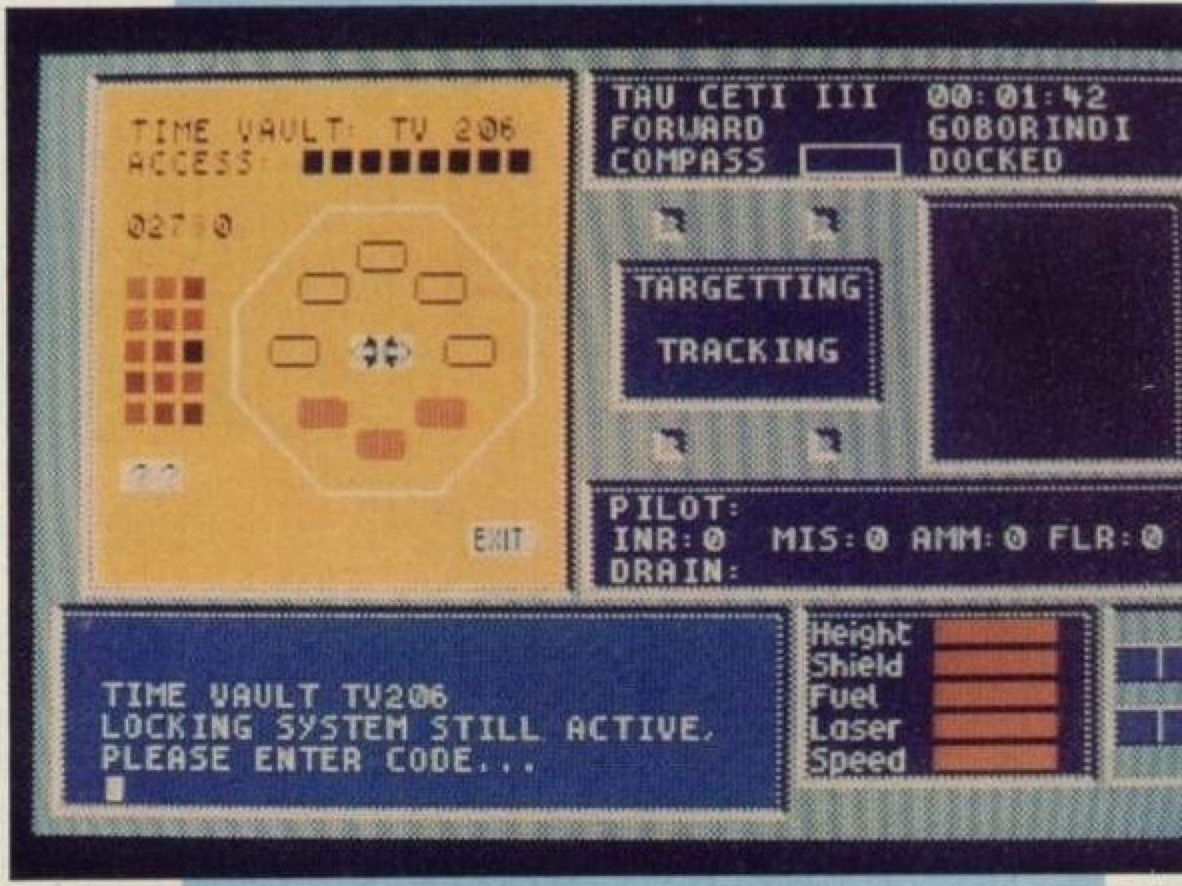
There's one chance. All the power for the defence systems comes from the planet's central reactor. Shut that down and the world will be safe. There's a problem here. The cooling rods you need to damp the fusion reactor have been removed and broken into pieces. They need to be located, rebuilt and then placed in the reactor. That would be a difficult enough job without the droids.

Taking a deep breath, you give your ship some height and pull back on the throttle. Cruising towards the limits of the nearest city, you can see stark silhouettes of distant and foreign architecture caused by the low position of the sun in the sky. When night falls, you'll have to switch to infra red but the thermal imaging equipment creates a blur on anything moving at speed. Your aim has to be good. You've got flares but they have to last — there won't be enough for every encounter.

The game employs hi-res shaded graphics, a multi-purpose display screen (which can even be used for making notes) and enough stealth and strategy elements to keep the most demanding of gamers interested. Disk versions will have something called a **Time Vault** (which sounds interesting but I don't know what it does) and a library to give the player access to useful information. It's a fast paced SF graphic adventure on the same scale as **Elite** — only the graphics leave the trading game standing. It's heading for the Amstrad . . .

Sean Masterson

Behold — the Time Vault! Crack the code to gain the benefits that lie beyond.



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TIME VAULT: TV 206
ACCESS: ■■■■■■■■
```

```
TAU CETI III   00:01:42
FORWARD        GOBORINDI
COMPASS        DOCKED
```

```
PILOT:
INR:0   MIS:0  AMM:0  FLR:0
DRAIN:
```

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TIME VAULT TV206
LOCKING SYSTEM STILL ACTIVE.
PLEASE ENTER CODE...
```

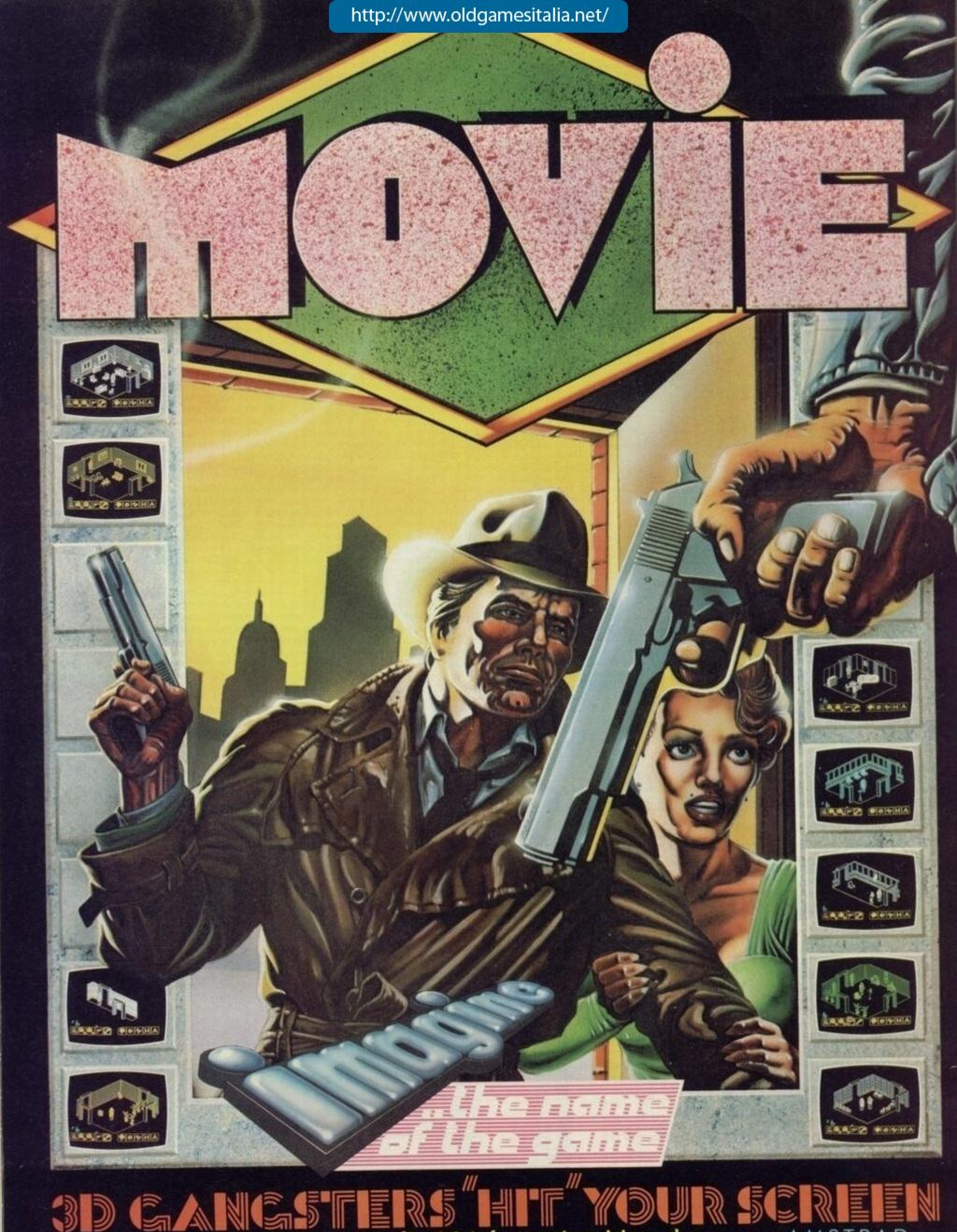
MOVIE
imagine
..the name of the game

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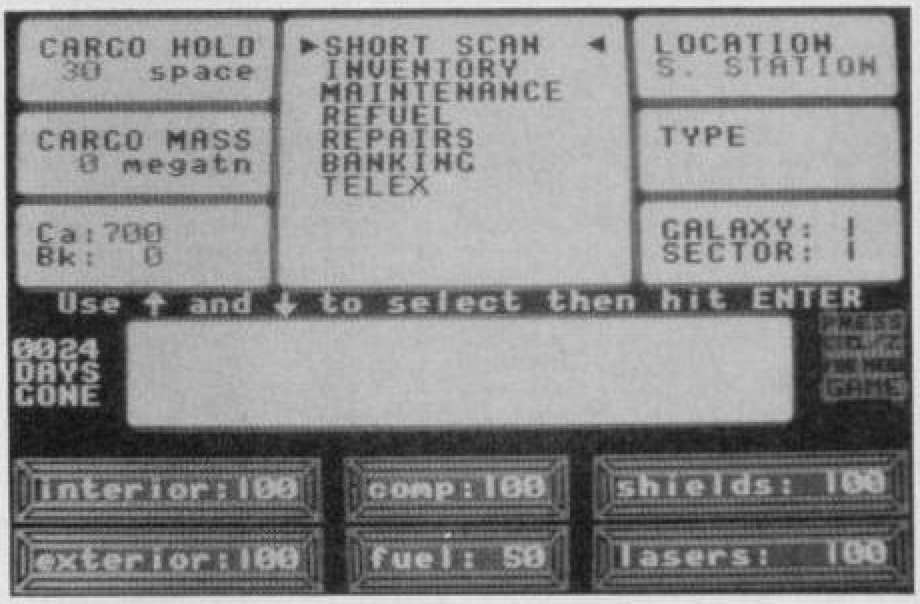
A SPACE TO UNWIND

Contrast is one of the most interesting things. Contrast is often equated with incongruity, thereby forming the basis for humour. The converse can apply and result in stunning tragedy. Contrast adds variety to make life interesting but also destroys the consistency by which we order our values. It is with certain trepidation therefore, that I reveal that this month's column is rife with contrast.

Believe me, this is not what I would have hoped but due to the nature of the products reviewed, there is a book review by Michael Jampel, a football strategy game and a science fiction trading game — what could contrast more? To help you cope with the situation, I can only suggest you take each item as a totality in its own right and deal with the concept of editorial continuity in the best way you can. If in doubt, consume a disproportionately large amount of alcohol through a straw — I understand there are several voluntary organisations to help you rehabilitate afterwards.

Alternatively, this may be the moment you have been waiting for. A multi-coloured mosaic of Muppetese may just be the cure for stagnant synapses stifled by the hitherto scarcity of simulation games for the Amstrad. Could this be the beginning of the end . . .


CARGO HOLD
30 space
►SHORT SCAN ◄
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MAINTENANCE
REFUEL
REPAIRS
BANKING
TELEX
LOCATION
S. STATION
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Bk: 0
GALAXY: 1
SECTOR: 1
Use ↑ and ↓ to select then hit ENTER
0024
DAYS
GONE
interior:100
comp:100
shields: 100
exterior:100
fuel: 50
lasers: 100

MACROCOSMICA

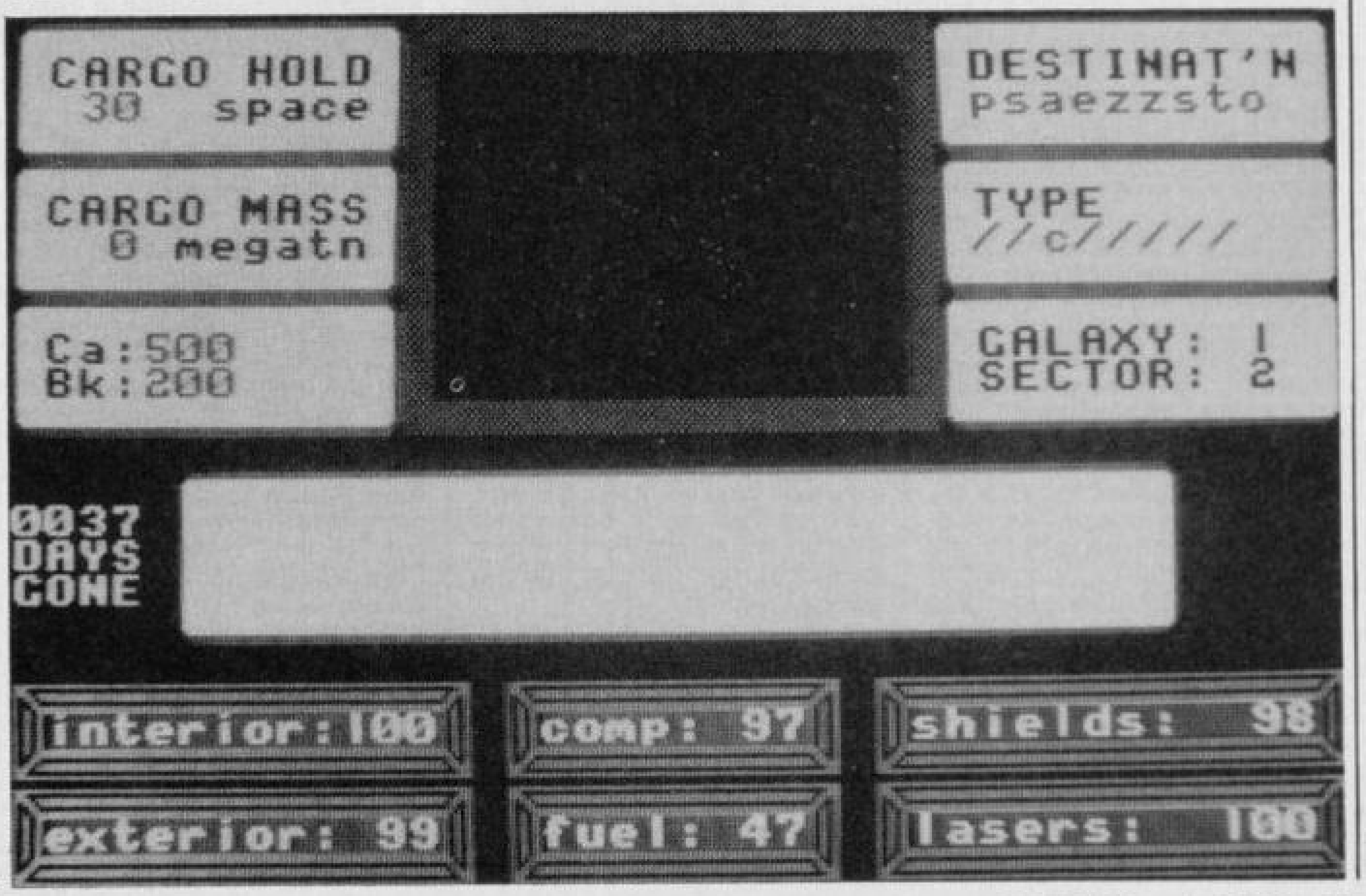
Amsoft, £8.95, cass, £14.95, disk, joystick and/or keys
Author: David Reading

A real time space adventure set in the 30th century — the trading boom is at its peak and the potential to make (or lose) millions of credits has never been greater! Not only can individual traders make their fortune but governments too have recognised the potential for the fast buck/credit (delete where aplicable) and reap the profits from landing taxes, import duties, repair centres and refuelling points. Of course there are always those entrepreneurs of the space lanes, the pirates, who know perhaps better than most where the real fortunes are to be made. According to the inlay, at least the rebels are more civil. Make of that what you will.

So the stage is set for this tongue-twistingly titled future trading game. Packaging is standard for the Amsoft Gold range which means the cassette/disk is boxed simply and accompanied by a simple instruction booklet. One of the first pieces of information given to you by the booklet indicates the scale of the universe. At the start of each game, a randomly generated 3D universe is created consisting of 1012 planets, 60 space stations, 62 black holes and 18 galaxy hypergates. Each of the planets is named and assigned one of a possible 3840 codes to indicate its trading characteristics. The universe is then subdivided into ten known galaxies (an eleventh is created but kept hidden from the player) and these are connected via the hypergates. Each galaxy is divided into ten sectors of sixty cells making a total playing area of 6600 cells. Each cell contains a planet, space station, another phenomenon or merely empty space. The temptation to quote the **Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy** is almost unbearable.

A player can view data on a limited number of the cells, depending on the level of play. At any one time, the short range scanner can display nine cells of three sectors simultaneously; the one currently occupied and the two adjacent sectors. Information gained on worlds within this area varies from game to game. Planets' codes determine the availability of various kinds of goods (potential cargo), intergalactic hyperdrives, repair and maintenance facilities, ship upgrade centres and even casinos. Long range scanning reveals the whole of the sector currently occupied as a 12x5 cell grid.

The flight deck screen displays all the information necessary during space flight, including dangers such as oncoming meteor showers and low energy levels. If pirates are encountered, they can be fought using keyboard or joystick control via a small view screen on the flight deck display. Other important matters can be dealt with from the flight deck including equip-


CARGO HOLD
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Bk:200
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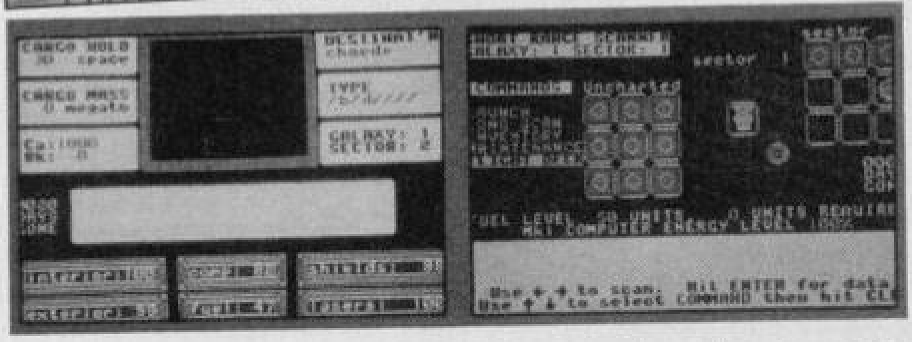
SECTOR: 2
0037
DAYS
GONE
interior:100
comp: 97
shields: 98
exterior: 99
fuel: 47
lasers: 100

Amsoft
GOLD
macrocosmica
Casino
TRADING CO
BY DAVID RE



ping the ship, refuelling whilst planetside and carrying out repairs.

Anybody familiar with *Elite* will be wary of customs officials who will not take kindly to finding your hold stashed with narcotics and the like. Once they have been dealt with, you can get on with the trading however. Sometimes rebels will come and offer twice what you would expect for certain items but it's advisable to be wary when such offers occur. They are not always genuine. The similarities between this game and *Elite* are fairly obvious but in *Macrocosmica* the emphasis is definitely on the strategy as opposed to the joystick. One area where this is revealed is the innovative banking system which allows the use of credit if an account is set up and well maintained. It also negates the problem of having to pay pirates protection money (which is an unreliable way of dealing with the problem anyway).

There is also a Telex which offers the player the chance to obtain the whereabouts of the mysterious Mr Hoo. I never caught up with this gentleman and cannot therefore comment much on why he has been included in the game. Other interesting and potentially profitable items of news may be obtained from the Telex however, and it is to a player's detriment if he fails to take advantage of this fact.

The game plays well in every respect and generates terrific atmosphere as more explorations are carried out. It's really for those who want to go where no man has gone before but without the necessity to take a joystick along. I will play this one again in future.

Presentation 60%
Graphics 68%
Complexity 50%
Authenticity 78%
Lastability 88%
Overall 86%

BIG LEAGUE SOCCER

Viper Software, £6.95
cass
Author: Adam Whitlock

Leprechauns aren't very good at football, they keep on getting trodden on. So, to avoid injury, Sean Masterson has handed the latest soccer strategy game over to Julian Rignall, Amtix's resident football hooligan.

Big League Soccer puts you in a managerial role and attempts to simulate the trials and tribulations of taking your team from the obscurity of the fourth division to the giddy heights of the first division.

When you start the game you are asked to input your name and choose the level of play from the five provided (from amateur upwards). Once you've typed in your your name and selected the level of play it's time to pick your team. There are 88 teams from the four divisions included in the program, but if your fave team doesn't appear then you can just change any old team's name to your own (Liverpool were transformed to the highly talented and successful *Ludlow Lethargics*). When the team has been settled you can choose the colour of their shirts and the simulation begins.

When the season commences a series of options are presented. These appear in between every match and allow you to gloat or cringe at your league position, managerial rating, get ready to play a match, enter the transfer market or save out the game for reloading at a later date.

When you start a new game it's advisable to have a quick glance at the transfer market to see the strengths and weaknesses of your team. Naturally, the weak players should be extrapolated and sold off, al though not at once otherwise you'll end up with a small, undermanned, overworked squad (like us at Newsfield). You also have the option to buy in new players, but only when your club has earned enough money. To stop you completely reshuffling the team there is a limit to the amount of transactions which can take place in between each match — in this case only four. A nice feature about this game is the fact the names of the players are drawn randomly from a large pool of real footballers — the two *Ludlow Lethargics* strikers were the amazing pair (and I'm not talking Samantha Fox) Mark Hughes and Ian Rush!

When you're happy with the team you can play a game. Press the 'play next match' key and you'll be shown the details of your fixture and the defensive, midfield and attacking strengths and abilities of your opponent. Once you've absorbed that information you can then progress to the next screen and pick your team. The team is shown on the right hand side of the screen and the team sheet on the left.

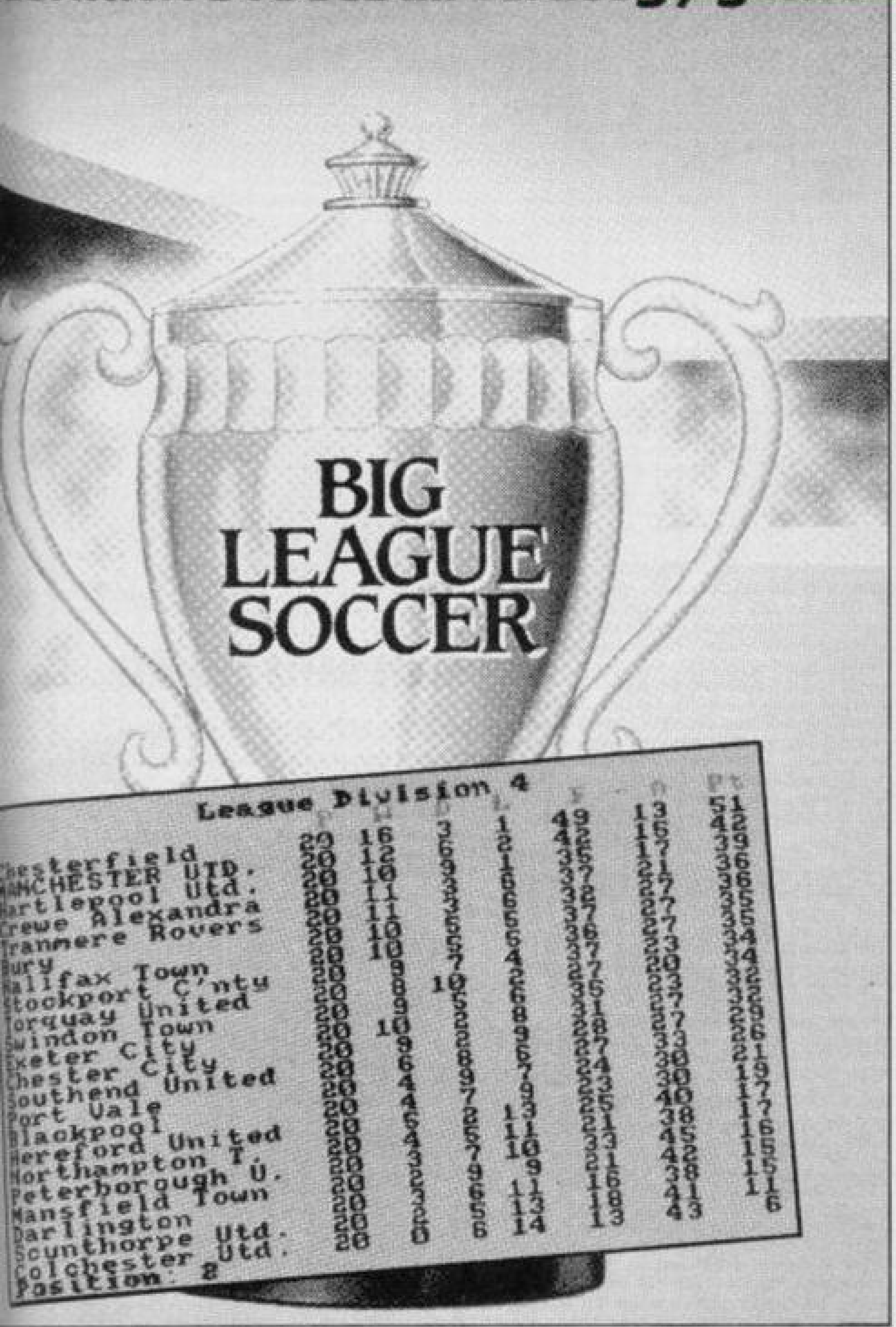
Each player is shown complete with information about his strength, skill, energy (or stamina) and the position he plays. What you have to do is try to assemble the best combination of players and produce the strongest team. This isn't always easy since there are other factors which can interfere with players like injury and suspension.

Getting the team together does takes a fair bit of planning, and it's advisable to play the members of the team in their proper positions, otherwise the overall strength and abilities of your team will become weakened. Once you think you've selected the best team the ratings of the players are analysed by the computer and processed to give the overall ratings of the defence, midfield and attack as well as overall strengths. You can now return to the initial screen where you can compare your team's strengths with your opponent's. If you think there could be a few changes made then you can return to the former screen and reselect the team.

Once you're satisfied the team fielded is the strongest possible the match can commence. The screen changes to a fixture list showing the matches between the other teams of your current division. Pressing a key starts the animated 'match highlights' function where you have to sweat it out and watch your team playing the match.

Here the screen shows a 3D panoramic view of one half of the field (depending on which team is attacking) complete with two attackers and three defenders who run and boot the ball around. It's rather like watching a miniature *Match of the Day*, only it's more involved since it's your very own team playing. The highlights don't last very long and show only the goals and near misses (which cause many a groan when they happen). Once each half has been shown the whistle is blown and the result, complete with attendance, income (receipts and sundries), expenditure (wages and sundries), the profit (or loss) made and the team's bank balance are shown.

You can then have a look at the other results of the day and how they've affected the league table and your position in it. Throughout the season problems constantly rear their ugly head, like a player's stamina rating dropping sharply if they definitive football strate



play every game. There are also injuries, suspensions and financial matters to worry about too — real ulcer-generating stuff!

The game continues in this fashion until all 42 matches have been played and the season draws to a close. If, when this happens, you're in the top three promotion is given and you move up to the next division (if you're in the bottom three, though, it's relegation time matey). You're also given a financial bonus (depending on how well you did).

Your team is then reassessed by the computer and changes are made to their ratings, skill factors etc for the new season. If you're promoted then the value of the players is also increased allowing you to complete bigger financial transactions.

Just like real life, there is also a risk you might get sacked — mismanage the accounts or get relegated and your job is put firmly on the line . . .

This is a great little game which bears a remarkable resemblance to *Football Manager*, the game which appeared on just about every computer in existence (including the trusty and crusty ZX81). There are some faults in the program which have been overlooked, like the fact that you can field a suspended or injured player, and also ou est la FA, Milk and European Cups? The program also plays very slowly and takes ages to print out things like the league tables and the other league results. It would have been nice, too, if the 'match highlights' were an optional feature — many's the time when I wished the result could have been printed straight up onto the screen. Still, perhaps I'm being impatient, after all this is supposed to be a simulation, and a part of being a manager involves sitting on the bench biting your nails.

Big League Soccer is excellently presented with heaps of lists, facts and figures available at the press of a key. The graphics on the 3D highlights are rather primitive and flicker a lot, but the overall effect given is pretty good. With the save game facility it means the game can be played infinitely, season after season allowing you to slowly build your team up to become the best in Britain, and once that happens you can up the difficulty level and struggle again. If you're at all motivated by soccer then go out and buy this brilliant game, you won't be disappointed.

Presentation 89%
Graphics 47%
Complexity 79%
Authenticity 91%
Lastability 96%
Overall 84%

CREATING POLITICAL AND MILITARY SIMULATIONS ON YOUR MICRO

by Mike Rose, £7.95,
Interface Books

As Mike Rose implies in the introduction, programming is all about defining one's needs, then breaking that definition down into parts, subdividing each of those parts into tasks and finally applying those tasks to whichever language is being used. This book attempts to turn the program into flowcharts and then into BASIC and offers help at all stages. In general it succeeds.

Despite its title, this book covers economic and diplomatic games as well as military and political simulations and immediately sets about dealing with the similarities and differences between these four areas of decision making. The various chapters lead from 'The Model' through 'Game Plans' and 'Opponents' to 'Translating the Flowchart' via sections on Input/Output and finally De-bugging (only 2.5 pages but useful to all programmers).

The second half of the book's 175 pages is taken up with ten program listings which demonstrate the lessons of the previous chapters. These games are between 250 and 600 lines long (with 50 lines averaging about 1K of BASIC) and cover the periods from the Vikings to a hypothetical Galactic Empire. Throughout the book, the emphasis is on structure and this is shown in all the example programs which begin with about ten lines of the form:

```
10 GOSUB 1000:REM setup

20 GOSUB 2000:REM first stage
```

Each chunk is independent of the others, leading to easy debugging and also to the use of identical sections in each game — such as a key pressing routine, which pauses the game while instructions are read and decisions made. This is an introduction to the idea of libraries of previously written routines being used to save work. One gripe is the author's suggestion that single letters be used for variables (eg F for fuel). I would strongly disagree, as meaningful variable names are much better for de-bugging especially in long programs.

The programs are written in a 'Universal BASIC' and are not machine specific. There is a nice touch in that vocabulary difficulties are dispelled by a short table of keywords and what the author means by them. For example, REPEAT UNTIL GET$<>"" is translated as 'Wait until a key is pressed.' This is useful and although it would have been better to have a table of keywords for each of the BASICs mentioned, the main thing to remember is that on the Amstrad, this should be written WHILE INKEY$"":WEND

The programs in the book could be typed in by a complete novice but to gain the most from them, a small amount of knowledge is useful. Anyone who is worried about not being up to the necessary standard should consider this problem: Given two arrays A(4,4) and B(4,4) compare the respective elements of each array and if, for that element, A is greater than B, print A — else print B.

This is the hardest problem likely to face anyone intending to write programs on the lines suggested by this book, although greater sophistication may lead to a more complex game. In fact, this is one of the book's limitations; the games produced will never be up to commercial standards in terms of speed and complexity, although they will provide a useful introduction to strategy gaming.

Because of the universal nature of the BASIC used, very little in the way of graphics is provided and there are no details on sound whatsoever. However, as these are strategy games and not 'zap-the-aliens' programs, I don't consider this to be a serious omission. One complaint is perhaps better aimed at the publisher rather than the author. £7.95 is really too much for a paperback book 175 pages long, even though this appears to be the going rate for this kind of literature. Nevertheless, this book is definitely worth looking at, even bearing the high price in mind — especially is it seems to be the only one of its kind available.

Michael Jampel

WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS

So, here I am again, the poor Comps Minion, slaving over a hot Amstrad typing in all the lucky winners. Of course I don't begrudge the odd reader winning a prize or two — it's only fair — but I am beginning to get just a weeny bit jealous. I mean take Wayne Monaghan and Nick Robinson. Those two lucky guys get to win a modem and radio controlled truck — what do I get? — the left overs from Garry Liddon's lunch — rich pickings for many a mortal you might think — they would be except that it was his lunch from two weeks ago which he had lost on his desk. Oh! never mind, theirs no point in wingeing — no one takes a blind bit of notice. I suppose I'll just have to grit my teeth and congratulate the winners — Aaargh!

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN COMP

Well for all of you who entered the **PSS Comp** way back in issue 2 here are the three that managed to secure the giant Airfix model each — hope you've got a pilot's licence.

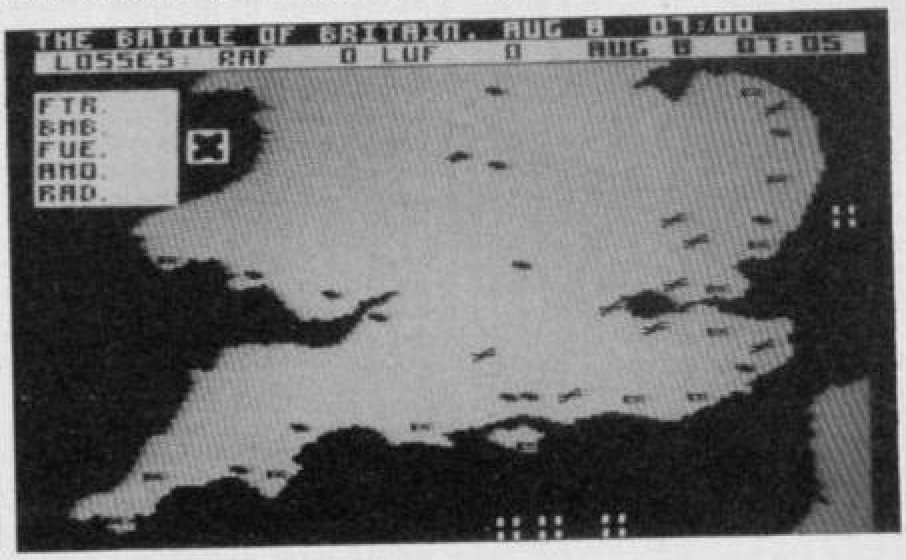
Paul Matin, Grantham, Lincoln; Harran Siva, Surrey, KT3 5DD; Johnathan Williams, Sutton, Surrey

The next ten each win a smaller kit — so you'll still need a licence but your dog fights are apt to be a little more cramped.

Andrew Burndge, St Thomas, Exeter; James Colman, Hellesdon, Norwich; N Fleet, Sudbrooke, Lincoln; A Freeman, Worle, Avon; Neil Harrison, Bourne, Lincs; Steve Mitchell, Basingstoke, Hants; Sj Moore, Tunbridge Wells, Kent; Alan Pawzey, Romford, Essex; T Roberts, Bangor, Gwynedd; John Thomas, Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan;

And the rest of you each win a copy of *Battle of Britain*.

John Baugh, Wolverhampton, West Mids; P Bowden, Hillingdon, Middx; D A Brook, Otley, West Yorkshire; Daniel Castle, Marlborough, Wiltshire; D R Clowser, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd; Craig Collins, Grimsby, S Humberside; S M Culshaw, Stretford, Manchesterandrew Gillespie, Bushmills, BT57 8RA; V Hinman, Pinner, Middx; Alistair Kerr, Plymouth, Devon; Stewart Lipscombe, Millbrook, Southampton; Mark Foster, Little Hadham, Herts; Richard Ormson, Bury, Lancs; D Parkins, Newtown, Carlisle; Ian Ridley, Blundellsands, Liverpool; A M Robinson, Maidstone, Kent; A Slate, Waddon Way, Croydon;


THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN. AUG 8 07:00
LOSSES: RAF 0 LUF 0 AUG 8 07:05
FTR.
BMB.
FUE.
AMO.
RAD.

THE GREAT TASWORD AND TAS-SPELL COMPETITION

Not surprisingly the **Tasman Comp** attracted a lot of entries. Perhaps that may explain why the poor -ED has so much trouble reading your hand scrawled letters for OTS — you must all be waiting to see if you have won a wordprocessor. Ten of you have but somehow we are going to have to sort out who has which type of system, just so that you get the prog that fits. Perhaps Tasman might crack that — I think they stand a better chance.

Peter Bennet, Mansfield, Notts; Kevin Cadman, Doncaster, S Yorks; Alan Curry, Coventry; Stan Fowell, Dagenham, Essex; P A Hunt, Stanmore, Middx; Howard Martin, Grange-Over-Sands, Cumbria; Ian Ridley (Very lucky Ian!), Bludellsands, Liverpool; G Veazey, Peaceheaven, Sussex; Eric Wilson, Little Downham, Cambridgeshire; G Wooton, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire.

THE KEEP ON TRUCKIN COMP

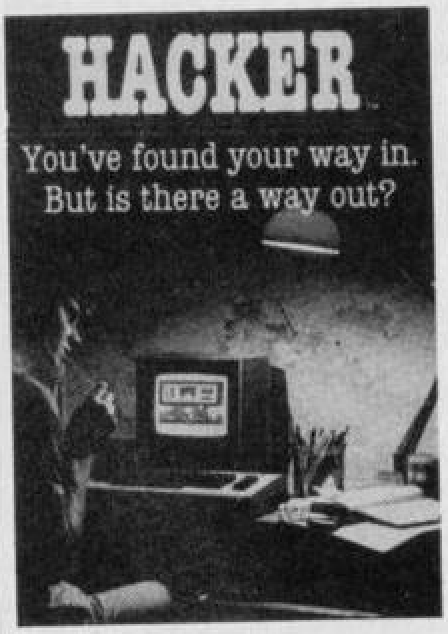
Well at least this comp gave you a chance to brush up on the old CB talk. Naturally we expected a hefty response for two reasons. Firstly, lots of you must have started out your career as Amstrad consumers when they where churning out CB radios by the ton, and then of course it was BIG AL at Amstrad who said that the Amstrad was a machine for the truck driver — even if it's only a radio controlled one. **Nick Robinson** from Leamington Spa in Warwickshire gets the truck and the rest of you each win a copy of the game.

JC Allan, Rippon, Claro Bks; Matthew Baucher, Pontypool, Gwent; Eric Bingham, Belfast, BT7 3AW; I Blake, Gedling, Notts; Chris Cane, Hoveton, Norfolk; D Clark, Cumbran, Gwent; David J Cobane, Wythenshawe, Manchester; Miss D Connolly, Plymouth, Devon; Mr K Easton, Brinsworth, Rotherham; David Evans, Tamworth, Staffs; Kenneth Ewan, Fife, Scotland; A Foxall, Shard End, Birmingham; Robert Grace, Great Finborough, Stowmarket, Suffolk; Colin Huxted, Nr Rochester, Kent; Mark Issac, Llantwit Major, S Glam; M Leakey, Taunton, Somerset; R Messenger, Abernethy, Perth, Scotland; Mr R Pugh, Llandaff, Cardiff, S Glam; Anon AMTIX Reader, 160 South Esk Rd, Forrest Gate, London; David Ridge, Thornbury, Bristol; Duncan Rippon, Cinnamon Brow, Warrington; K Sandell, Torpoint, Cornwall; R Sarno, Hyse, Tameside; Paul Thorne, Stevenage, SG2 9DF; Ian Williams, Formby, Merseyside; Steven Williams, Luton, Beds; SR Williams, Twickenham, Middx; Paul Williams, Chesterfield, Derbyshire; Jonathan Williams, Sutton, Surrey; AS Wylie, Thurso, Caithness;

HACKETY HACK COMP

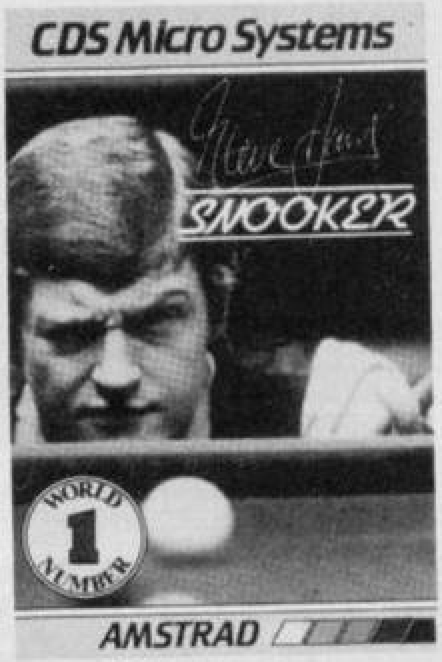
Well lucky old **Wayne Monaghan** from South Shields Tyne & Wear gets to win the smart modem donated by **Activision**. You had better get an interface sorted out so you can start being a pest on the phone. For the twenty nine runners up, you can still practise your hacking with a copy of the game.

Lea Anthony, BL Ffestiniog, Gwynedd, N W WALES; P Atkinson, Sandown, Isle Of Wight; D Balaam, Ashtead, Surrey; Tony Baxter, Sheffield, S8 9QE; RA Bewes, Ridge Estate, Lancaster; SImon Bloomer, Worsley, Manchester; Jason Borley, Canvey Island, Essex; Lee Branch, Deeping, St James; Da Brook, Otley, West Yorks; Ian Brooke, Castlemilk, Galsgow; Nigel Button, Sutton, Surrey; DK Clark, Cumbran, Gwent; Paul Davison, Killingsworth, Newcastle- Upon-Tyne; Shaun Dennison, Nelson, Lancashire; J Fatihfull, Skelmersdale, Lancs; Martin Fisher, Hindley, Wigan; Claude Frederic (Hello Claud!), Jodoigne, Belgium, 5990; Tommy Friis, Tranevanget 9, Brondby, Denmark; JS Gandy, Firth Park, Sheffield; Mike Ginns, Mitcham, Surrey; Allan Gray, Lerwick, Shetland, Scotland; Michael Hare, Harrogate, Yorks; V Hinman, Pinner, Middx; RF Keeley (You Should Have Tried The PSS Comp!), Officers Mess, RAF Brize Norton, Oxon; David Lambley, Friskney, Boston, Lancs; Scott Logan, Kirkmaurhill, Lanarkshire, Scotland; Charles Marr, Linlithgow, W Lothian; C Martindale, Sandridge, Herts; Andrew Neale, Pershore, Worcs; FG Neaterway, Rayleigh, Essex; S Odell, Worhting, Sussex; Michael Palmer, York; David Pullen, Charton, London; Andrew Richardson, Rushden, Northants; Be Riley, Flixton, Manchester; Nigel Riley, Altrineham, Cheshire; Jason Scott, Redbridge, Southampton; Hira R Singh, Middlesbrough, Cleveland; Michael Speers, Dowaghadee, Co Down, N Ireland; R Spencer, Armthorpe, Doncaster, S Yorks; Ap Traverse, Stamford, Lincs; Gillian Wall, Corstophine, Edinburgh, Scotland; Brian Waugh, Newburn, Newcastle; Tc Weaver, Portsmouth, Hants; DJ Wells, Skegness, Lincs; S R Williams, Twickenham, Middlesex; Iain Williams, Formby, Merseyside; Bob Winder, Ormskirk, Lancs; Keith Young, Annan, Dumfriesshire;


HACKER
You've found your way in.
But is there a way out?

STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER

I'm afraid that this comp has given me a tinge of brain strain. The main prize was easy. **Sye Law** from Littleborough in Manchester has already had his tickets. The next five winners could chose between a video, signed cue, signed book, a 'T' shirt or sweat shirt. **Maxine Carter** from Peterborough has booked the book while the other four wanted a signed cue each. They are **Paul Griffin**, Chippenham, Wilts; **A Critchley**, Bracknell, Berks; **B Weedon, Kilmarnock** KA3 1TX; **R Kew-Moss**, Wellingborough, Northants



The rest of you are awarded a copy of the game . . .

W Learoyd, Bramley, Leeds; Jonathan Williams, Sutton, Surrey; Mr Richardson, Troow, Ayrshire; Nick Wood, Thatcham, Newbury; JP Denton, Stevenage, Herts; Michael Jefferson, Bradshaw, Bolton; Simon Cartlidge, Wheatley Hills, Doncaster, S Yorks; Jason Schofield, Burnage, Manchester; Paul Martin, Grantham, Lincs; Michael Rooke, Chichester, W Sussex; N Vadgama, Portslade, E Sussex; Sandra Shevill, Coulsdon, Surrey; M Winterburn, Wetherby, W Yorks; Neil Sharp, Onchan, Isle Of Man; Guy Pearman, Rouemarsh, Benson, Oxon

The Comps minion was too damned frightened to pick any winners for the Friday the 13th comp this month, but we've locked him up in the broom cupboard (in the dark), so we should get some results by next issue — otherwise . . .

AMTIX! USER CLUB NEWS

I ♥ AMSTRADS
AMST CLUB FOR YOU
JOIN NOW
NEW CLUB

MANCHESTER AMSTRAD USER CLUB

by Malcolm Harding

Welcome to a regular new feature in AMTIX!, a page devoted to Amstrad user clubs and bulletin boards. The aim is to enable the aforementioned to have printed space to write about themselves, offer advice and help to newly formed or planned organisations, complain about any rip—offs they may have encountered, and generally sound off about all and sundry. Want to have a jolly good moan or just see your name in print? Look no further here's your chance for fame (sorry you will have to seek your fortune elsewhere).

AMTIX! wants to hear from User Clubs the length and breadth of the country. Write and tell us how, why and when you set up the club, its aims, when and where it meets, how many members you have, if you have any special events planned for the coming year, if you publish a newsletter, how often etc. By now I'm sure you've got the hang of it.

Anyway it's time to launch this highly readable page (don't you dare miss it) so here we go. **Manchester Amstrad User Club** this is your life (with apologies to a certain television programme). Secretary, Steve Stanner started the ball rolling in March last year after reading a magazine clipping which said the best way to learn computing was to start a user club. The first step was to try and form a committee and to this end publicity was needed. This was achieved by such means as posters and adverts and, of course, word of mouth. As Steve is a bus driver he spread the word while driving around the streets of Manchester! The publicity had some success and the inaugural meeting of the MAUC was held on March 10. Fifteen people were invited and seven turned up. As these were obviously the keenest people it was decided they would form the core of a committee. The club's annual general meeting took place on February 24 and it is intended to hold the meeting on the same date every year.

Asked about the club's aims Steve said they wanted to help the beginner in the world of computing. The club also provided a venue where people could get together and sort out problems and generally exchange ideas and views. The club also produced its own newsletter, intended to organise an annual fair, and teach computing at all levels to a programming capacity. But by far the most important aim was to meet the people who used computers on a daily basis.

MAUC members are at present busy planning their second computer fair which is being held at St Mary's Hall, Levenshulme, at a date to be announced. Plans have not been finalised yet but are well on their way, and the club hope dealers will be interested in taking a stand.

The club meets on Monday nights at Openshaw Technical College, from 7 pm to 9 pm and fees are 50p per meeting. The college is easy to find from the city centre. Follow the signs to Openshaw along Ashton Old Road. After passing the junction with Grey Mare Lane travel about 200 yards then take the right turn. Go into the college through the main doors and find room G25. Courses being run for members this year are Machine Code for the beginner, which is taught by Jan Podlaski, a computer teacher at Openshaw College and also a BASIC from the START course which is taught through the club's monthly newsletter by Father Peter Kitchen. An electronics course is also planned for the summer, again taught by Mr Podlaski, which will involve the building of such things as RAM boards.

At the last count there were 53 newsletter members and 36 members who attend the Monday night meetings. The newsletter is sent to members worldwide with the UK membership fee being £5 annually and the overseas fee £7.50. Cheques/money orders should be made payable to SJ Stanner. Subjects covered in the newsletter include reviews of hardware, members letters, problems etc, general Amstrad news, computer dictionary, monthly peek and poke routines, advertising items both for sale and wanted, BASIC from the START course (this is copyrighted), news from abroad, and competitions where software can be won.

Anyone wanting to know more about the club can contact Steve by writing to him at **21 Gatling Avenue, Longsight, Manchester M12 5SX** or ringing him on **061—224—4700** evenings only.

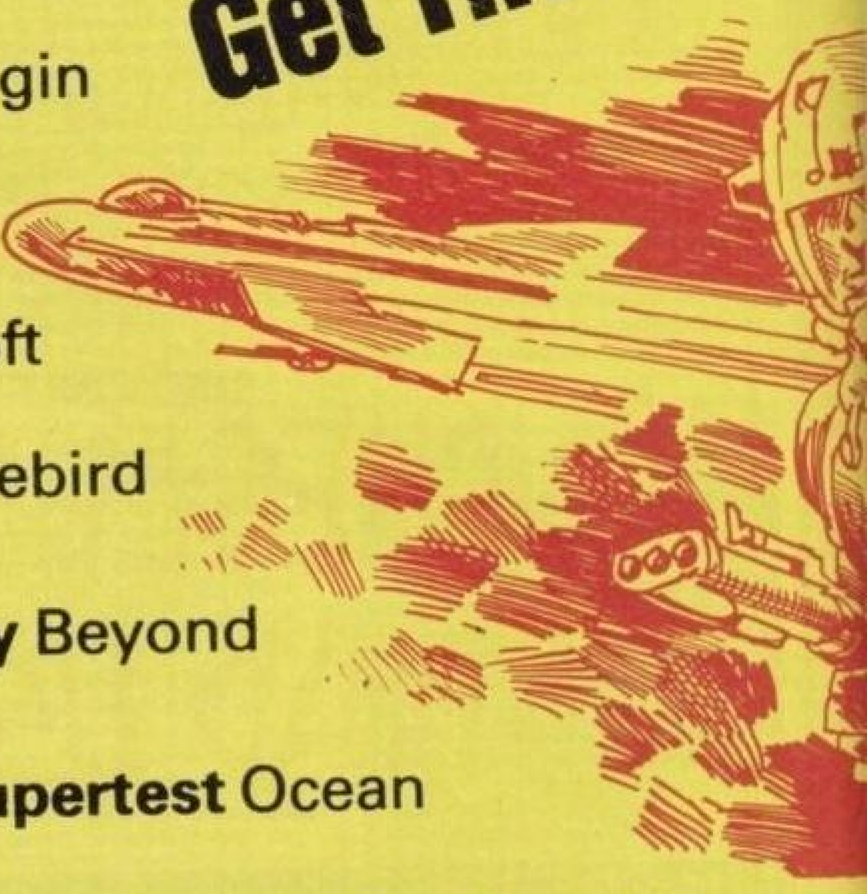
That's the lowdown on the **Manchester Amstrad User Club**. If you would like your user club featured in the May issue of AMTIX! write to us now and tell us everything about your organisation.

**Write to AMTIX! USER CLUB NEWS,
1/2 KING STREET,LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.**

TOP TWENTY F

Amsters Get The Vote

Last month the AMTIX! team made up their own Top 20 Chart. This month it's your turn. Below are the 20 best games at the moment as voted by AMTIX! readers. The figures in parenthesis are last month's position.



1 *(3)* **Yie Ar Kung Fu** Imagine
8,528,820 Nick Stokes, Harrogate

2 *(7)* **Sorcery Plus** Virgin
136,525 Eric Barwell, Doncaster

3 *(9)* **Bruce Lee** US Gold
76,000 Alexander Frapp, Glasgow

4 *(17)* **3D Grand Prix** Amsoft
8,330 Scott Watson, Dumbarton

5 *(—)* **Elite** Firebird
'Elite' Krysia Schmidt, Manchester

6 *(4)* **Spy vs Spy** Beyond
9,800 John Sands, Leicester

7 *(—)* **DT's Supertest** Ocean

8 *(19)* **Way of the Exploding Fist** Melbourn
31,400 Jonathan Hill, Bradford

9 *(12)* **Marsport** Gargoyle Games

10 *(—)* **Starion** Melbourne House
32,911 Sean Brady, Eltham

12 *(—)* **Lords of Midnight** Beyond

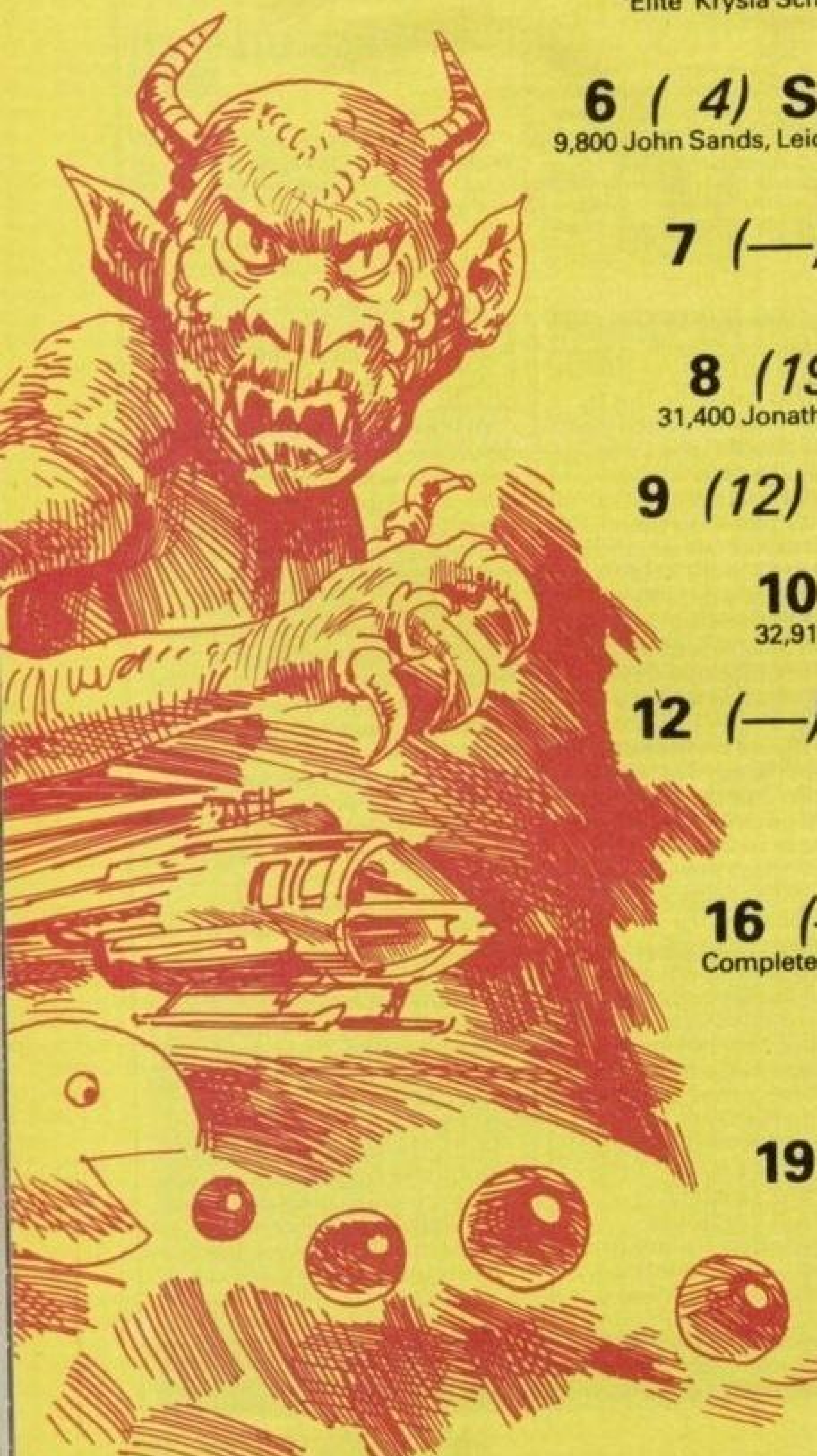
14 *(11)* **Red Moon** Level 9

16 *(—)* **Terrormolinos** Melbourne House
Completed H Barrel, Evesham

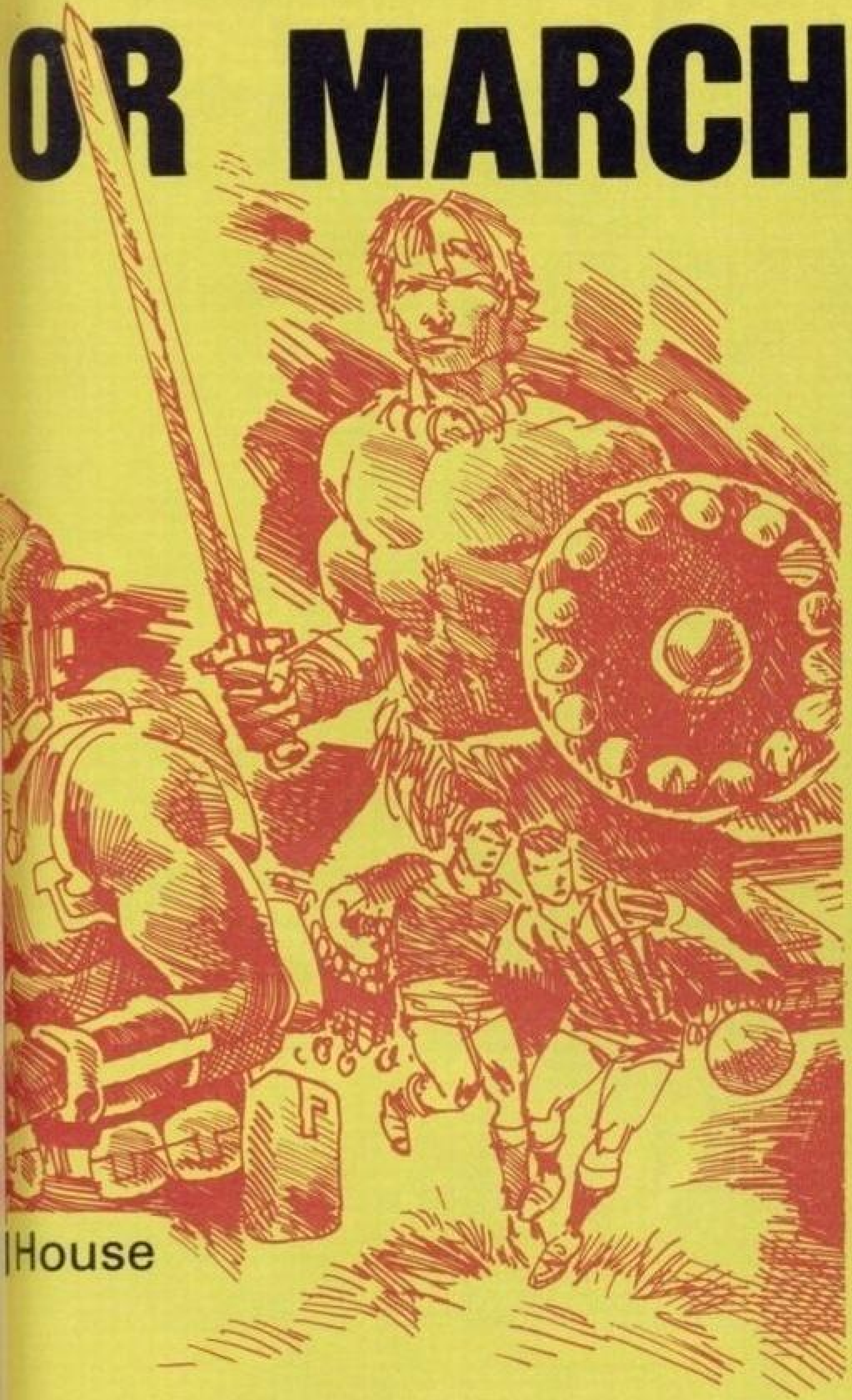
18 *(5)* **TLL** Vortex

19 *(2)* **Finders Keepers** Mastertronic

20 *(—)* **Graphic Adventure Creat**



OR MARCH



House

11 *(16)* **Alien 8** Ultimate

13 *(—)* **Defend or Die** Alligata
55,900 Christopher Winstanley, Preston

15 *(13)* **Cauldron** Palace

17 *(—)* **Nightshade** Ultimate

Incentive

HOW TO VOTE AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Thanks to everyone who voted for this first ever AMTIX! Readers' Chart – *we don't mind that you disagreed with some of our choices last month because that's what democracy is all about — disagreeing continually! In order for the Chart to be as representative as possible, it's important that as many of you as possible vote every month, so keep those forms coming in!*

Congratulations go to **Melbourne House** as their name appears more times than anyone else's (three times to be exact) and to **Imagine** for hitting the number one spot with *Yie Ar Kung Fu*. Nice, too, to see **Incentive**'s *GAC* in at the number 20 slot, indicating that not everyone out there is a purist alien zapper!

The first of the high scores have gone in, but some people aren't filling that part of the form in so there are gaps (and how do you get a high score on *GAC* anyway?) — come on folks, fill in all the details! Anyway, congratulations to everyone who got their scores published — keep them coming in as well.

As promised last issue, there are three winners (if you can call being the first to be pulled out of the bag 'winning'). They are, **Scott Watson**, **Jonathan Hill** and **Steven Parkinson**. Three of Aggie's £10 vouchers are on their way. Incidentally, the form has been altered this month so you can let us know what title you would like if you win — this should make processing things a lot faster. The things we do to please . . .

Voting is simple enough. Just fill in the form (ALL of it!) and list your five most favourite games in descending order with the best at number one. If you don't want to cut up the mag, you can emulate the form on a postcard (preferably) or the back of a sealed envelope, but don't forget to write in all the details needed!

AMTIX! READERS TOP TWENTY CHART VOTING FORM

Please write in CAPS in an eyestrain free manner.

Name ....

Address ....

....

....

Postcode ....

The World's five hippest games in order of preference are:
TITLE
1 ....
2 ....
3 ....
4 ....
5 ....

From one of the five games above select one and give us your high score:

TITLE ....

ACHIEVEMENT ....

My machine is a 464/664/6128/8256 (delete as applicable).If I am a winner the game I would like is:

....

Send your coupon to:

AMTIX! TOP TWENTY, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB

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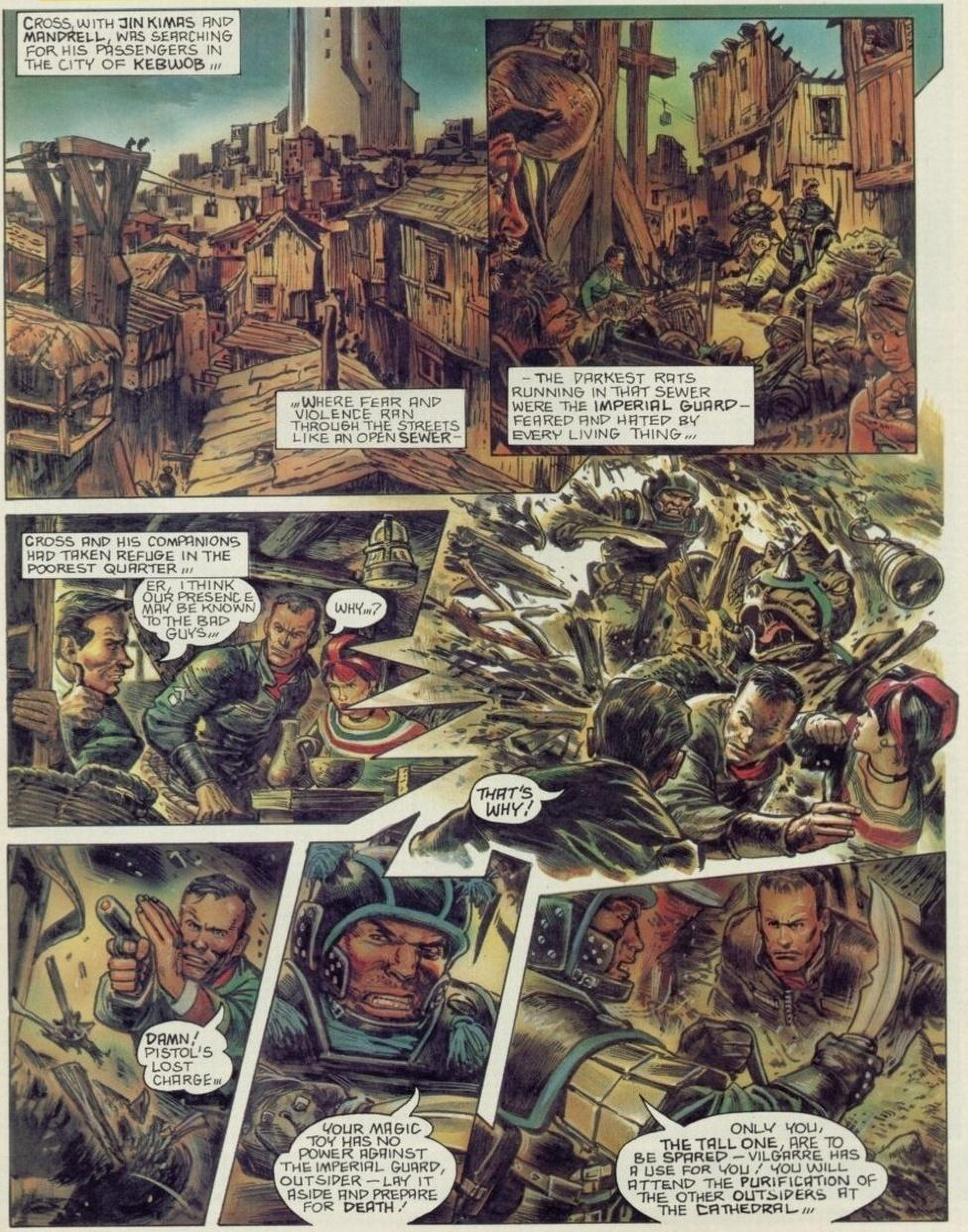
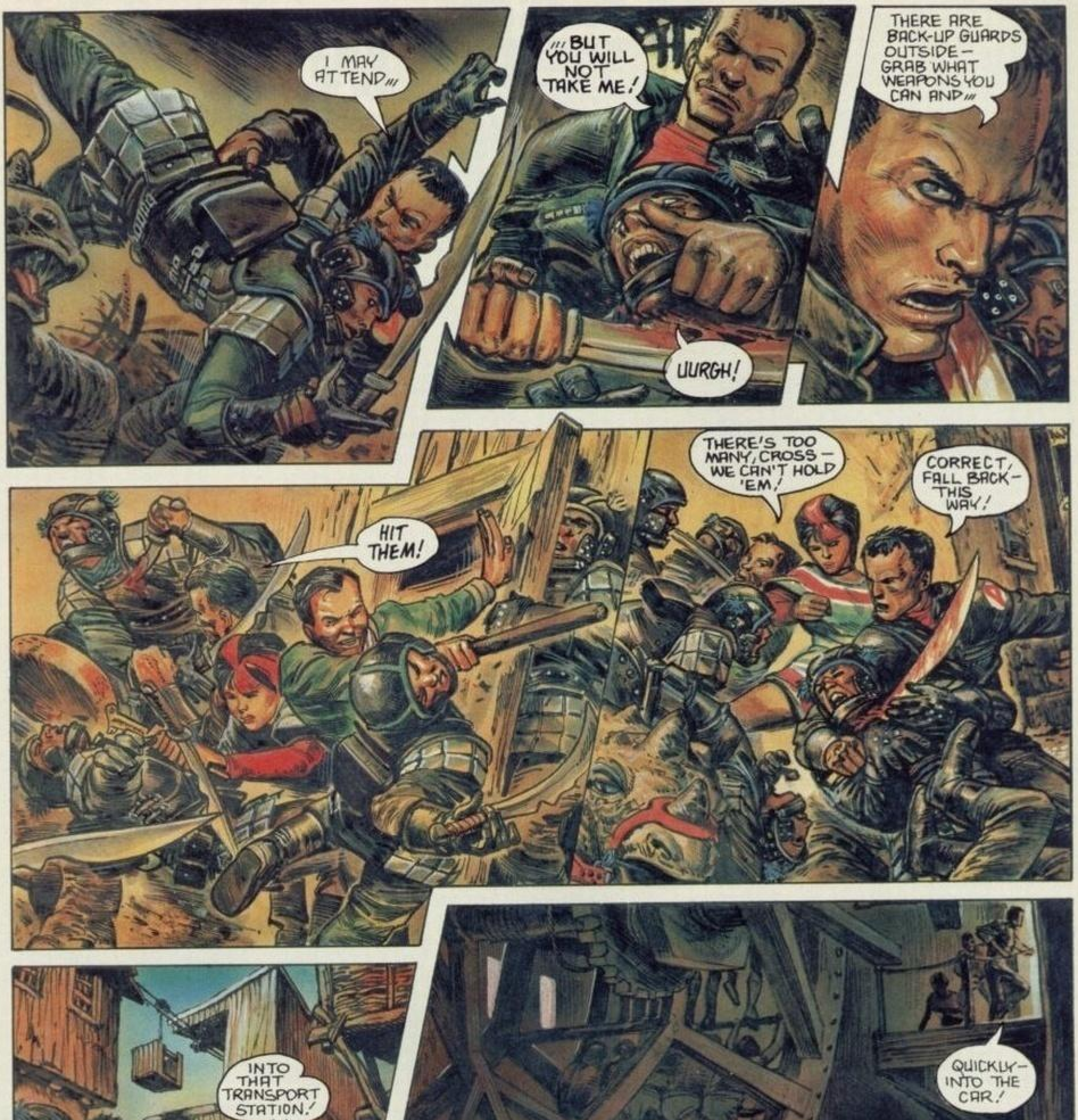
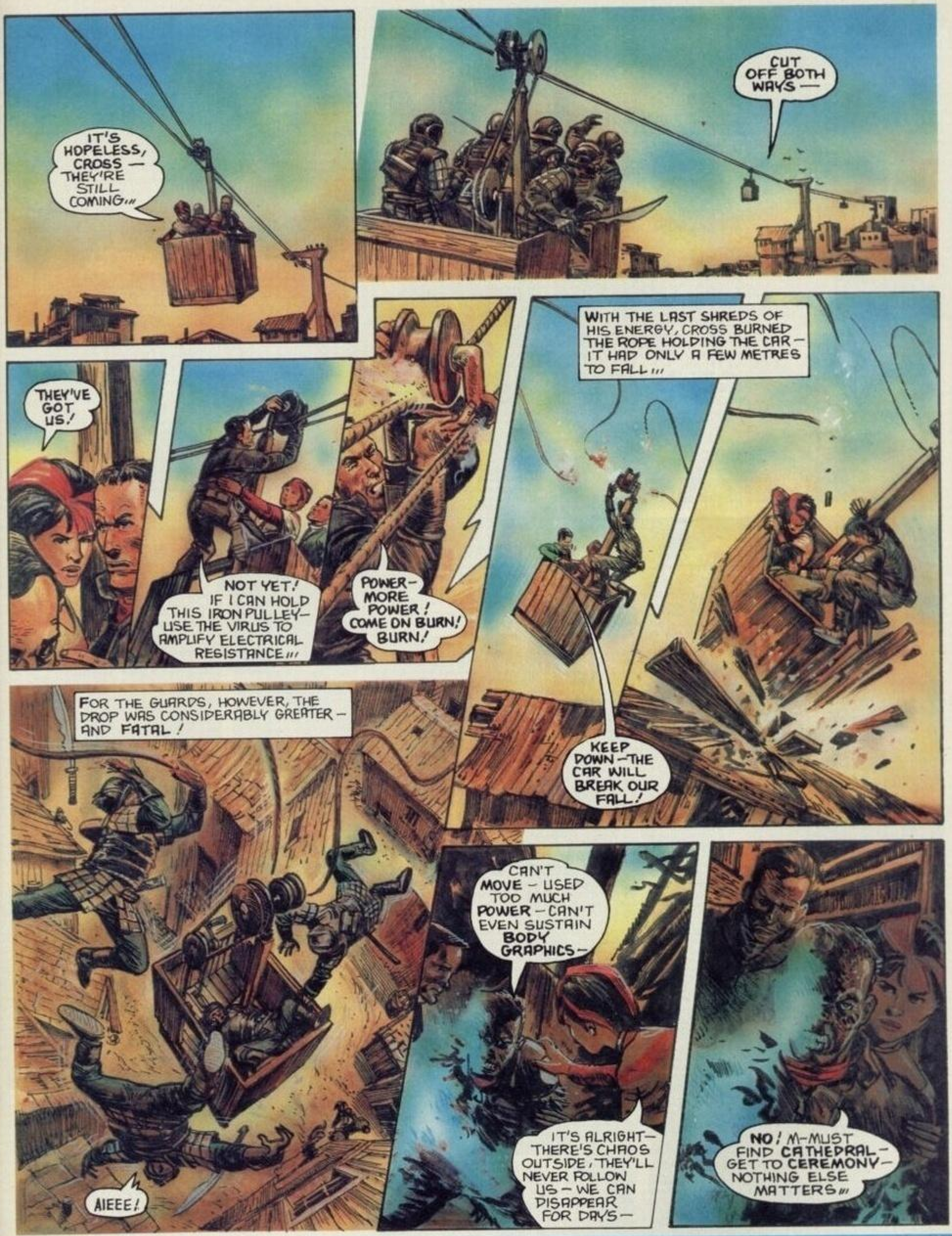
UPDATE:
The passengers of the **Star Liner Arcadia** were marooned and captive on an uncharted world. The man called **Cross** was dedicated to saving them. Actually, he was only part man; a mixture of human, computer and virus smashed into existence in Arcadia's crash, he was a bizarre hybrid. But he was still free and fighting. **He was their only hope...**

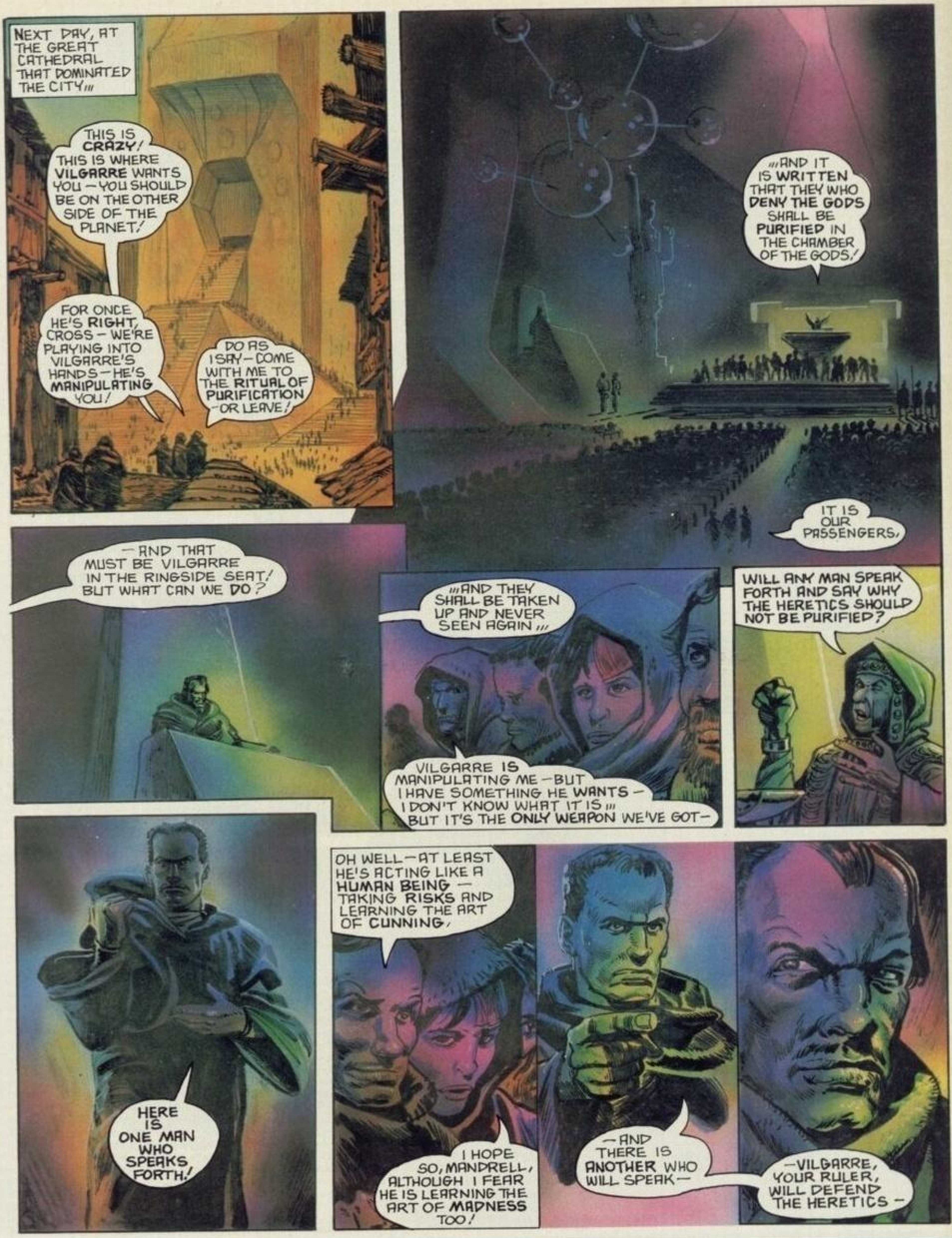
THE TERMINAL MAN


CROSS, WITH JIN KIMAS AND MANDRELL, WAS SEARCHING FOR HIS PASSENGERS IN THE CITY OF KEBWOB ...
... WHERE FEAR AND VIOLENCE RAN THROUGH THE STREETS LIKE AN OPEN SEWER –
– THE DARKEST RATS RUNNING IN THAT SEWER WERE THE IMPERIAL GUARD – FEARED AND HATED BY EVERY LIVING THING ...
CROSS AND HIS COMPANIONS HAD TAKEN REFUGE IN THE POOREST QUARTER ...
ER, I THINK OUR PRESENCE MAY BE KNOWN TO THE BAD GUYS ...
WHY ...?
THAT'S WHY!
DAMN! PISTOL'S LOST CHARGE ...
YOUR MAGIC TOY HAS NO POWER AGAINST THE IMPERIAL GUARD, OUTSIDER – LAY IT ASIDE AND PREPARE FOR DEATH!
ONLY YOU, THE TALL ONE, ARE TO BE SPARED – VILGARRE HAS A USE FOR YOU! YOU WILL ATTEND THE PURIFICATION OF THE OTHER OUTSIDERS AT THE CATHEDRAL ...


I MAY ATTEND...
...BUT YOU WILL NOT TAKE ME!
UURGH!
THERE ARE BACK-UP GUARDS OUTSIDE – GRAB WHAT WEAPONS YOU CAN AND...
HIT THEM!
THERE'S TOO MANY, CROSS – WE CAN'T HOLD 'EM!
CORRECT, FALL BACK – THIS WAY!
INTO THAT TRANSPORT STATION!
KEBWOB'S SUSPENDED 'RAILWAY' WAS NOT THE SAFEST MODE OF TRANSPORT EVER INVENTED BY MAN – BUT IT WAS INFINITELY SAFER THAN WALKING THE STREETS...
QUICKLY – INTO THE CAR!
...UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU HAPPENED TO BE ONE OF THE SLAVES WHO SUPPLIED THE MOTIVE POWER FROM TREADMILLS!

STORY BY KELVIN GOSNELL© DRAWN BY OLIVER FREY©


IT'S HOPELESS, CROSS — THEY'RE STILL COMING...
CUT OFF BOTH WAYS —
THEY'VE GOT US!
NOT YET! IF I CAN HOLD THIS IRON PULLEY— USE THE VIRUS TO AMPLIFY ELECTRICAL RESISTANCE...
POWER— MORE POWER! COME ON BURN! BURN!
WITH THE LAST SHREDS OF HIS ENERGY, CROSS BURNED THE ROPE HOLDING THE CAR— IT HAD ONLY A FEW METRES TO FALL...
KEEP DOWN—THE CAR WILL BREAK OUR FALL!
FOR THE GUARDS, HOWEVER, THE DROP WAS CONSIDERABLY GREATER— AND FATAL!
AIEEE!
CAN'T MOVE — USED TOO MUCH POWER — CAN'T EVEN SUSTAIN BODY GRAPHICS—
IT'S ALRIGHT— THERE'S CHAOS OUTSIDE, THEY'LL NEVER FOLLOW US — WE CAN DISAPPEAR FOR DAYS—
NO! M-MUST FIND CATHEDRAL— GET TO CEREMONY— NOTHING ELSE MATTERS...


NEXT DAY, AT THE GREAT CATHEDRAL THAT DOMINATED THE CITY...
THIS IS CRAZY! THIS IS WHERE VILGARRE WANTS YOU — YOU SHOULD BE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PLANET!
FOR ONCE HE'S RIGHT, CROSS — WE'RE PLAYING INTO VILGARRE'S HANDS — HE'S MANIPULATING YOU!
DO AS I SAY — COME WITH ME TO THE RITUAL OF PURIFICATION — OR LEAVE!
...AND IT IS WRITTEN THAT THEY WHO DENY THE GODS SHALL BE PURIFIED IN THE CHAMBER OF THE GODS!
IT IS OUR PASSENGERS.
— AND THAT MUST BE VILGARRE IN THE RINGSIDE SEAT! BUT WHAT CAN WE DO?
...AND THEY SHALL BE TAKEN UP AND NEVER SEEN AGAIN...
VILGARRE IS MANIPULATING ME — BUT I HAVE SOMETHING HE WANTS — I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS... BUT IT'S THE ONLY WEAPON WE'VE GOT —
WILL ANY MAN SPEAK FORTH AND SAY WHY THE HERETICS SHOULD NOT BE PURIFIED?
HERE IS ONE MAN WHO SPEAKS FORTH!
OH WELL — AT LEAST HE'S ACTING LIKE A HUMAN BEING — TAKING RISKS AND LEARNING THE ART OF CUNNING.
I HOPE SO, MANDRELL, ALTHOUGH I FEAR HE IS LEARNING THE ART OF MADNESS TOO!
— AND THERE IS ANOTHER WHO WILL SPEAK —
— VILGARRE, YOUR RULER, WILL DEFEND THE HERETICS —

Next: The Thing that wouldn't die...

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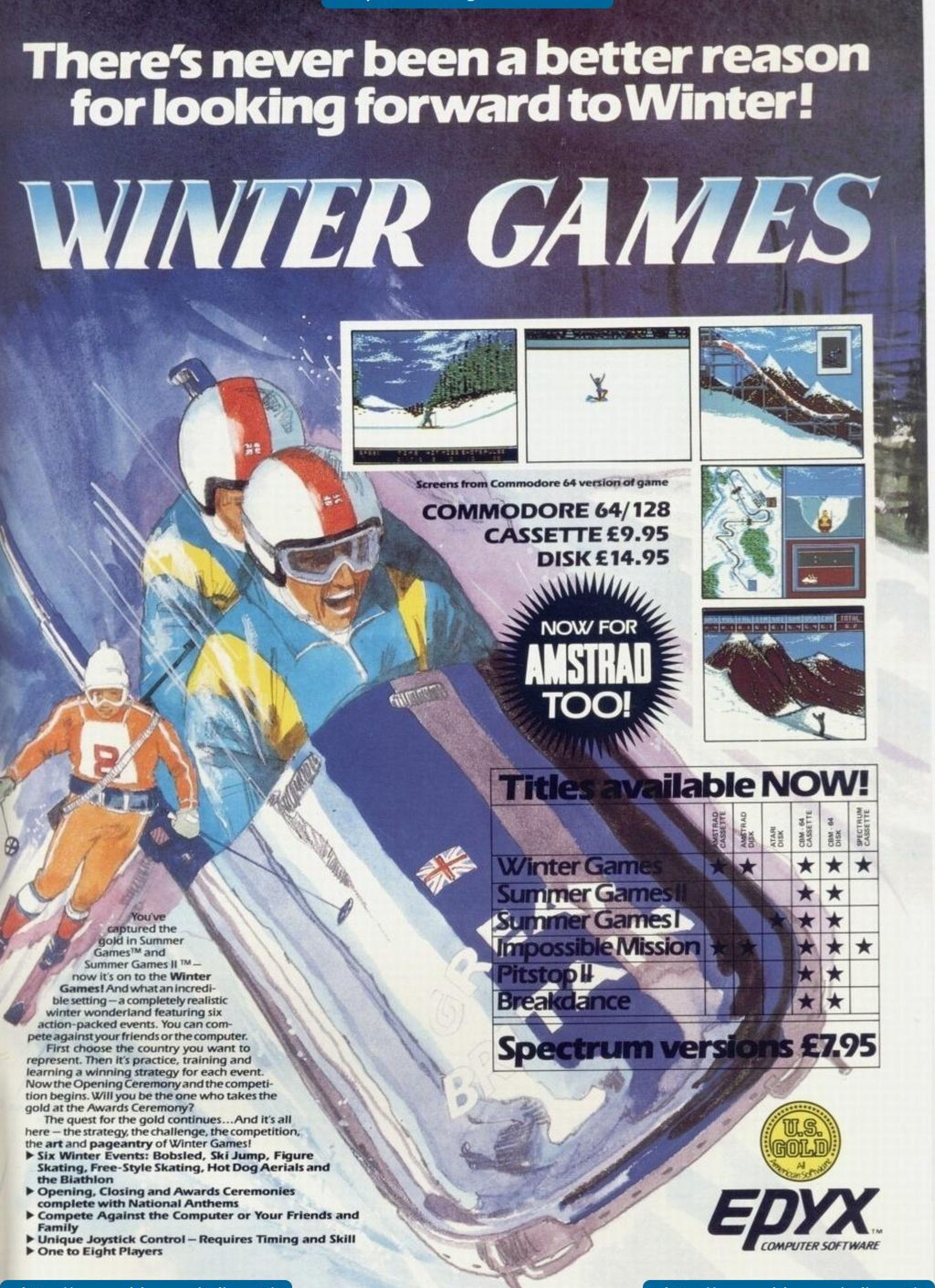
WINTER GAMES



Screens from Commodore 64 version of game

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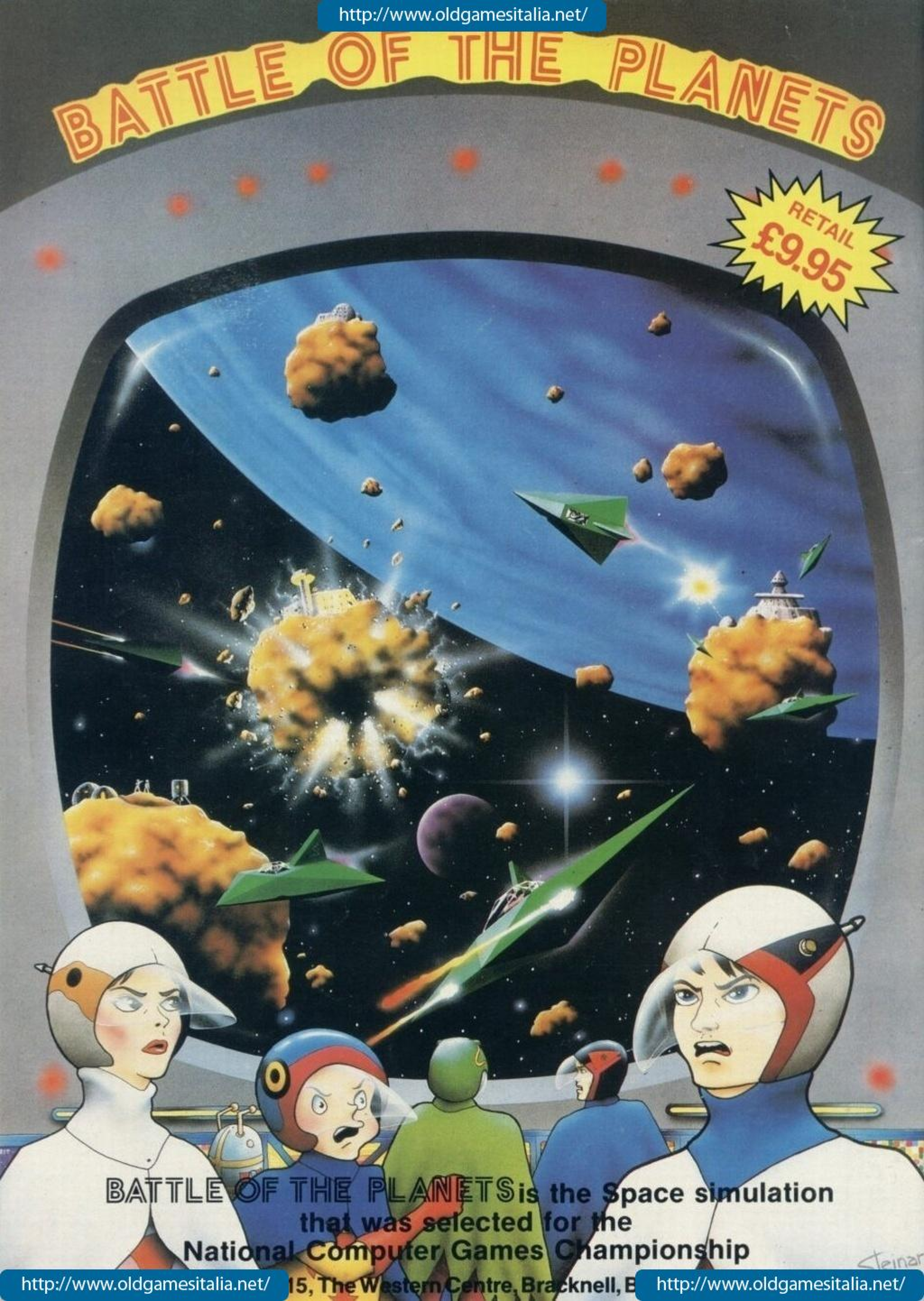
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